Antiquities History Culture and Shrines Of Jammu

Shiv Chander Sharma

About Book

History of Jammu forms an important chapter in the annals of India's resistance to the stream of invaders ushering out fresh from the Khaiber Pass and Central Asia. As force sentinels on the borders of India, Dogras-the inhabitants of Jammu region were the first to face attack of the Arabs, Ghazanavids, Turks etc..

Earlier, Jammu region was the habitat of primitive man who left behind an evidence of his existence in the form of stone age tools and other vestiges. Besides, the height of cultural attainment of this land can be gauged from the finely artistic terracota Budha heads rivalling in naturalness and expression unearthed from Ambarran village in the border town of Akhnoor and world famous works of Pahari Paintings.

The great temples of Sudh Mahadev belonging to 2nd or 3rd century A.D. and those of Krimchi, Babore, HariHara (Mahabilvakeshwara) temple of Billawar and Mahakali temple in Bahu Fort, all belonging between 8th to 12th century A.D. and are ample proof of the high attainment of the early Dogras in the sphere of spiritualism, art and architecture.

Although number of books on history and culture of Jammu are available hardly a book covering antiquities, shrines, alongwith history and culture of Jammu has been written, therefor a reader always finds himself looking for such a unique book.

Antiquities, history, culture and shrines of Jammu is such an unique work worth its name and a reader can find in addition detail of each shrine of Jammu region alongwith photographs.

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Antiquities, History, Culture and Shrines Of Jammu

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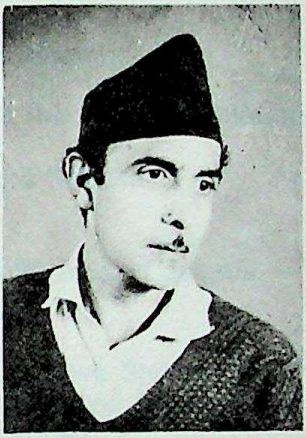

Dedicated to
My Father
Late Brij Bhushan Sharma

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Preface

Jammu, the winter capital of J&K State is known as the "City of Temples" and more than 20 Lakh people from all over the country visit Jammu on way to Vaishno Devi every year. But there are many other ancient and important shrines in the region. Normally every mohalla or colony of Jammu has more than one temple but many among them have been built in recent times. Among the few of the ancient shrines of Jammu region are Mata Vaishno Devi near Katra, Budhe Amarnath near Poonch, Shiv Khouri cave near Ransoo in Riasi, Mahabilvakeshwar Temple (8th century A.D) in Billawar, Babor Temples near Udhampur (10th century A.D), Krimchi temples also near Udhampur (10th century A.D), Sudh Mahadev and Mantalai temples near Chenani (2nd-3rd century A.D), Shahdara in Rajouri and Sukrala temple near Billawar. A comprehensive study of these shrines reflects the composite culture of Jammu region.

In the 3rd chapter of this book I have given full description of each shrine based on the written material available on these shrines and my personal visits to these shrines. I have also taken into consideration the oral history which is being passed on to new generations from the old. Each article covers all the aspects related to a particular shrine and I hope that readers particularly scholars will enjoy reading it.

Unfortunately, a very little work has been done on these shrines, by the researchers and that is why hardly one or two books are available on this subject.

On the other hand a number of books have been written on the history of Jammu but most of them have been written by persons who were either the employees of the rulers or they were paid for their works. Like Rajtaringini of Kalhana there is so such source for the history of Jammu. However, two available sources namely, Rajdarshni and Gulabnama seem to have been based on the "Vanshavali" of Dogra rulers which is of the recent origin. Interestingly, both the books were written by the Author who served in the courts of Dogra rulers and so the chronolgy of the Dogra rulers provided by the authors seems to be doubtful. Being aware

of this fact, historians of Jammu have made little efforts to trace the exact chronology.

Due to this reason I have just touched the early history of Jammu and discussed only a few eminent Dogra rulers briefly in the first chapter. In other chapters only important and ancient shrines of all faiths and sects have been included whereas newly built shrines find a brief description only.

The last chapter is based on the tourist attractions of Jammu, both the famous and little known. As Jammu has vast tourism potential, the tourist traffic can be diverted to Jammu because of prevailing insurgency in Kashmir. If ample facilities are provided to the tourists, I think Jammu can become a paradise for the tourists. I have included even some those places of hilly areas which need exploration and I hope that state government will rise to the occasion by providing facilities and wider publicity to such places. Even otherwise, to boost the economy of the Jammu region, the State Govt., should encourage tourism as one of the industries.

I am thankful to Sh. S.D. Rohmetra, editor-in-chief of Daily Excelsior who has always been a source of inspiration to me for writing on history, culture and shrines of Jammu. Sh. Anil Sharma, Spl. Correspondent Daily Excelsior also deserves special mention as he has always accompanied me during my visits to many ancient shrines.

Thanks to Dr. D.C. Sharma, Dr. Vijay K. Sharma and Sh. Shiv Kumar Sharma for their valueable help and guidance without which this book could not have been completed. I am also thankful to Mrs. Susheela Sharma, my mother and Mrs. Madhu Sharma my wife besides my daughters Aakanksha(Anky) and Mrinal (Mini) who always gave me a helping hand and co-operation in this work.

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Dated: 24th May 1994.

FORE-WORD

In the mad race towards modernisation and Westernisation, the Jammu region has undergone a sea-change and so are changing the thinkings and perceptions of its habitats and if the madrace continued, the coming generations would not spare us in cursing in the same manner as we do to our elders, who did not make even a dismal effort to honestly pen a few words about cultural heritage, religious concepts and other issues related to history of Jammu. Archaeological Survey of India has of late started preserving some ancient monuments and what about those which could not face the on-slaught of time and have perished. Whatever material available for reference seems to have been 'constructed' at the behest of then rulers and one should have no doubts in mind that a remunerated writer would always keep the interests of his employer in consideration and will not shy away in concealing some stark relaities and facts. None dared or cared to make even brief mention of the Old historic shrines and antiquities of Jammu. Kudos to a non Jammuite Late. J. N. Ganhar, who though being a Kashmiri, made a sincere effort and brought out a book on Jammu, but since he was an outsider, much has been left untouched by him. Again his book of which he himself was the publisher, is not available anywhere.

Keeping in view all these facts Mr. Shiv Chander Sharma has made an honest and sincere effort by penning details about the shrines and pilgrimages of Jammu region in which he has covered almost all the corners of province. The book besides throw light on the antiquities, their importance and history relating to different shrines and places of worship. The books provides detailed knowledge about the shrines in a single volume and prove to be an asset for research scholars, as only a single book has the capacity to fulfil their needs and wages.

While commenting about the book it would be most improper and injustice if few words are not written about the author. Shiv Chander has been associated with Daily Excelsior since 1980, when he started contributing to the paper and by contributing to Daily Excelsior, he is at present finding space in almost all the leading dailies and periodicals of the country. I wish him all success.

S.D. ROHMETRA

Editor in Chief, Daily Excelsior,
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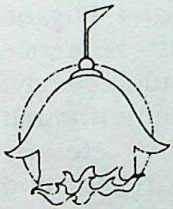
1 CHAPTER I



INTRODUCTION

History of Jammu shrouds in mystery because of non-availability of authentic record of the period before the rule of Maharaja Gulab Singh. The only two original sources available, are Rajdarshnini by Ganesh Dass Wadhera and Gulabnama by dewan Kirpa Ram. English Translations of both the books are also available now, but interestingly, these two sources are not fully reliable as authors of these two books seem to have compiled the chronology of the rulers based on Vansha walis, the origin of which is doubtful. Many other books on the history of Jammu have also been written by several eminent writers but most of these are not reliable.

By going through these available sources it seems that those authors have tried to link the dynasty of Gulab Singh with Lord Rama and even Manu, believed to be the first man on the earth, only to please their lords. Even naming of Jammu after Jam bulochan is unreliable. There is no doubt that Jammu was ruled from its capital at Bahu around 10th or 11th Century A.D. and thereafter the capital was shifted to Babbapura (Present Babor).

It was only in 14th Century A.D. when the capital was again shifted to Jammu by Raja Maldev. So, it is doubtful that Jambulochan built Jammu naming it after his name in the era Before Christ.

However, ancient Aryan literature, Vedas and Purans mention Jammu with different names and with reference to the areas lying between different rivers. Simultaneously, the history of adjoining areas also mention Jammu (though not by this name), its inhabitants and rulers etc. By comparing these sources, some eminent researchers and scholars have traced out the facts and efforts for further explorations are still in progress. There is every hope that hidden parts of the ancient history of jammu will come into light. In this context Malfuzat-I-Timuri, the autobiography

of Amir Timur, Rajtarangini by Kalhana and Tarikh-i-Ferishta etc. are regarded as reliable and helpful.

The first known inhabitants of Jammu region are believed to be the tribes named Pischachas. A reference occurs in Puranas quoting Rishi Vashisht that inhabitants of the area lying between river Ravi (ancient Iravati) and Chenab (Chander Baga) were the worshippers of Phallus. Later Nagas, Yakshas and Khasas also inhabited this belt now called Jammu. But ultimately they were defeated by the Aryans who entered this belt from different sides, most probably via Punjab and Shivalik range of hills.

With the advent of Aryans, local tribals accepted the dominance of the invaders and this way the religion, culture and way of life of the local tribals was changed. Later, several shrines of Aryan's gods were also built.

Though Aryans continued to face stiff resistance from the local tribes ultimately they defeated all and most of the local tribals were either killed or forced to live under Aryans dominance. Thereafter Aryans took over control of the territories of Jammu and became the rulers.

How the natives of Jammu were named Duggars or Durgaras is also interesting. According to analogy propounded in 19th Century A.D. by a popular belief, the word Dogra or Duggar has been derived from Dvigarta-the land of two hollows of Mansar and Sruinsar lakes. Another version adds that due to rivers namely ravi and Chenab making boundries of this belt it was called Dvigarta in the same manner Himachal is called Trigarta for lying between three rivers namely Satluj, Bias and Ravi.

However European and other scholars do not give credence to these beliefs and still every version is doubtful in absence of authentic source.

Another tribe of Jammu hills-the Gurjaras or Gujjars is believed to have come from Gujarat but similarity between

Gojri and Haryanvi dialect reveal that Gurjaras might have come from Haryana and settled in the hills of Jammu region in the time not known so far.

Anyhow, dominance of Aryans remained unchallenged in Jammu like other parts of Jambudwipa (Asia Continent) and being united and more powerful than the original Indians they set up their own administration in every part of India and thus began the new era of Aryan rule.

Antiquities of Jammu

Jammu finds first Historical mention in Ferishta's history. Thereafter, frequent references occur in several historical books including Amir Timur's biography in the 14th century, where Jammu is mentioned separately. Unfortunately, no record of Jammu is available before 2nd century A.D. but this does not mean that Jammu did not exist before. Ancient lore recorded in Mahabharta and some Puranas clearly mention Jammu (though not with this name) as a sacred place and geographical features and topography mentioned is identical to that of present Jammu. Besides, the stone tools, excavated from Jammu region belonging to pre-historic age are evidence of the presence of primitive human society in Jammu region.

Nilmata-a local Purana belonging to 6th-8th century AD refers to the Jammu region as part of the "Madradesh" which was respected for its sacred rivers such as Apaga, Devika, Chenab (Chanderbhaga) Iravati, Tawi, Udda and Visvamitra. Devika among these rivers was considered the most sacred and finds mention in ancient lore recorded in Mahabharta and some very ancient Puranas like Vishnu, Padma, Kalika, Matsya, Vamana, Amarkosa, Brihatsmita Astadhayayi and the Mahabharta. In Jammu region this river is still called Devika. The Nilmata Purana regards it as an incarnation of Uma and locates it in Madradesh, between the rivers Ravi and Chenab.

According to Vishnu Purana, a famous pilgrimage "Pur" is located on the Bank of Devika which is now called Purmandal and is still a popular pilgrimage of Jammu region.

Few more rivers of dogra land finds frequent mentions in the ancient literature. Among them is the Bhidya identified with Bein flowing near Koota and Anjikul identified with Anji, a tributary of river Chenab. The Nilmata Purana also mentions of stream Visvamitra and most probably this is Bassantar river.

A group of streams of Jammu region under a common name Tausi or Tohi finds mention in ancient literature. Tausi is regarded as ancient form of the river Tohi, Tao or Tawi in Dogri dialect. It is used for several streams of this region which rise in the southern slopes of the Pir-Panjal range of mountains and fall in the Chenab or Jhelum. The one Tousi mentioned in the Rajtarngini of Kalhan has been identified with the Tawi of Poonch. Two Tawis, one in Nowshera and the other in Jammu are tributaries of river Chenab. The Tawi or Tohi of Jammu is mentioned in the Nilmata Purana also.

The two major rivers of Jammu region which formed its eastern and western limits finds mention in the ancient form of their names in the ancient Hindu Literature.

In ancient times, Jammu region, like the rest of Indian sub continent was inhabited by non-Aryan tribes, the dark skinned people who seem to have left behind their true descendants in the low castes of Domb (Doom) and Meghs, Batwals and their akin tribes.

The ancient people of this area also find mention in ancient literature and according to the Rigveda, Shambar, the leader of people inhabiting the mountainious upper reaches of the Ravi river (i.e. Purushini) had offered tough resistance to the early Aryan adventurers for many years. He belonged to a race of dark skinned people who

worshipped "Phallus". The local tradition also postulates that the dark skinned Meghs and Batwals were the original inhabitants of this region.

Although Jammu region was a part of the great confederacy of the salva Madrakas, yet there were several smaller republican tribes in this region. Of these, the names of darvas, Abhisaras, Khasas, Gurjaras and Durgaras have been preserved in the written records from the pre-christian eras to about tenth century A.D.

The Darvas and Abhisaras were two different tribes but were sometimes coupled together as Darvabhisara, particularly when the geographical territory of the hills between rivers Ravi and Jhelum was to be denoted. The Darvabhisara are mentioned in Mahabharat and other Puranas among the tribes of Punjab. The Puranas attributes the origin of the Darvas to the legendary Chandervanshi king Usinara. One of his queens was named darvas whose son was known as Darvin. From him originated the royal tribe of the Darvas. The territory inhabited by this tribe from Jammu to Billawar (then Vallapura) was known as Darva.

Khasa is another tribe of the region which finds mention among the mountainous tribes in the Markhandaya Purana. Another Purana groups them with the Kulutas, the Tanganas and the Kasmiras. Stein, the translator of famous Rajtarangini points out that the Khasas occupied the valleys lying immediately to the south and west of Pir Panjal range between the middle course of the Vitasta river (Jhelum) in the west and Kastevata (Kishtwar) in the east. The rulers of Rajapuri i.e. Rajouri are referred to in the Rajatarangini as Khasa lords and their soldiers as Khasas.

The Naga tribe may also have something to do in the Jammu region where several Naga legends are still popular. The Nilmata Purana probably refers to the migration of some Nagas from Kashmir to Jammu region in the legend of Sodungula naga. This naga used to kidnap

the wives of the people and so he was exiled by the Naga king Nila from Kashmir and was allotted mount Usiraka in the Darva land i.e. Jammu. Vishnu, at Nila's request granted him security at that place.

Though Vedas, Puranas and ancient lore record the history of Jammu with due importance, the excavation of stone tools of neolithic age in Jammu region has given new dimensions to the history of Jammu.

The stone tools are evidence of the presence of the primitive human society subsisting on stone tools in Jammu region. The archaeological excavation has been conducted only in Jammu, Kathua and Udhampur districts so far, and that too at very scattered spots-which have yielded tools belonging to the early man, Pre-sohanian and Sohanian.

The implement famous terraces, there have yielded choppers, scrappers, discoids as main tool types.

These explorations reveal that the inhabitants of early and Sohanian stone age man were scattered all over the Jammu region lying between rivers Ravi and Chandrabhaga. The prehistoric man of Jammu region adopted another method of flaking which led to the production of uniformly thin, elongated and parallel sided flakes commonly known as blades.

Moreover, rocks of the Shivalik range are fossil ferous containing the remains of Molars, tusks, limb bones etc. of elephants, hippopotamous, horses, pigs, oxen, buffaloes etc. Nagrota and Utterbehni are favourite places for the collection of these fossils. These animals were therefore the companions of the pre historic man of Jammu region.

With the passage of geological ages, however, the mammoth hippopotamous disappeared and probably migrated towards south, to the regions of the "Indus Valley" where they were found till five or six thousands years ago

and were represented on "Indus Seals".

The sensational discovery of a proto-historic site at the right of Manda in Akhnoor on the right bank of Chenab has revealed the existence of harrapan, late Harrapan redware, greyware and black slipped ware. The further excavations at the site revealed a three fold sequence in a cultural deposit. The earliest marked by the arrival of Harrapan represented by the Pottery consisting mainly of Pre Harrapan redware and Harrapan redware.

Among the other antiquities found are copper double spiral headed pin having west Asian effinity, bone arrow heads, Terracota bangles, triangular terracota cakes and also post sheds with Harrapan grafti.

Early History and Chronology of Dogra Rulers

Though it is very difficult to trace out the early history of Jammu, the two sources namely Gulabnama and Rajdarshini as already mentioned, gives the chronology of Jammu rulers dating back to Ramayana period. Although the region has undergone so many territorial changes since then, the dynasty has remained undisturbed. Probably for this reason many historians and scholars have raised doubts regarding the chronology but in absence of authentic substitute one has to depend upon this very chronology.

According to this chronology, a king named Brahdbal belonging to the Rama dynasty participated in the Mahabharta war. He supported Kaurvas and was killed by Abhimanyu.

Later, Sudarshan, a king from the same dynasty ruled Ayodhya. He had two sons-Agnibaran and Agnigarab. After the death of Sudarshan (B.C. 1600-1560) Agnibaran was enthroned but as a protest against the indifferent nature of his brother Agnigarab left the kingdom and became a

seclude. He settled on the banks of Gangese and after some years of secluded life migrated to the Punjab with a Caravan of saints and reached in Kangra (Then Nagarkote). He was known to be Rajrishi for his saintly qualities. When the king of Kangra came to know about him he met him and enquired about his whereabouts. When Agnigarab told the king about his ancestors of being Raghuvansha the latter he offered the hand of his daughter and also gave him a part of his territory. River Ravi was a boundry of Kangra during those days but Agnigarab was not satisfied with this. He later Conquered some villages of Kathua (a district of Jammu) and declared himself a sovereign king.

After his death, his son Bayusharva married the daughter of a Rajput chieftain of Parole. The Princess was known as Erwan. Her death in younger age grieved the king and he commemorated her by founding a city after her name Erasvati. Still a Samadhi of the queen at Erwan near Parole in Kathua is present. Later, the king extended his territories to Ujh.

After the death of Bayusharva his son Parmitra married in Rathore dynasty. His son Puran Dev ruled the territory. Then his son Khayat Josan successfully fought several battles in Punjab and other parts of India. His son, Raja Agnigarab-II extended his territory beyond Jammu Tawi.

After his death his son Bahulochan 1350-1320 B.C. was enthroned. He migrated from Erwan and built a fort on the Banks of river Tawi, after his name. The city he founded was also named after his name. He fought a bloody battle with Chandrahas and was killed. As he died issueless his younger brother Jambulochan (1320-1290 B.C.) ascended the throne. He founded another city on the right bank of Tawi (ancient name Tousi). But it was his son Puran Karan who shifted the capital from Bahu to Jammu opposite to each other and thus declared himself as a first king of Jammu. It is added that during his period (1290-1260

B.C.) the valley of Kashmir was in a chaotic condition and Raja Purankaran was requested by the people of Kashmir to relieve them from the anarchy and restore law and order in the valley. So Puran Karan sent one of his sons Daya Karan to Kashmir who defeated the neighbouring hill chiefs and established his rule in Kashmir.

Raja Shakti Karan, (1200-1170 B.C) a descendant of King Puran Karan ruled Jammu and was popular as Shastri. He introduced for the first time, Dogri script. Later, Jammu was ruled by a number of his descendants.

The chain of Dogra rulers further descends to Raja Sarbhala Dhar (765-801 A.D). In 975 A.D. Nasaraddin Subaktgin invaded Punjab with huge army and Raja Jaipal gave him a tough fight. Raja Bhuj Dev of Jammu entrusted his reign to his son Avtar Dev and joined the battle field with a huge contigent of Dogras. Raja Bhuj Dev was killed in the battle but dogras forced the invaders to raise the white flag. This created close relationship between Punjab and Jammu and Jaipal began to treat Avtar Dev as his son.

When in 1000 A.D. Mahmood Ghazanvi invaded India through Punjab, jaipal offered him a tough resistance. After a bloody battle the defeat of jaipal cleared the way for Mahmood Ghazanvi to go ahead for the conquest of India later.

When in 1019 A.D. Avtar Dev died and his son Jasdev ascended the throne and founded another city on the bank of river Ujh and named it Jasrota.

According to a version Raja Bajjarla Dhar from the Dynasty of Raja Sarbhaldhar founded another town towards north east of Jammu. This step was necessitated due to invasions by Muslim invaders. The capital of Jammu Raj was shifted to this town Babbapura (now Babor).

Later,Raja Karan Dev gave this capital the new name of Manipur. He also built a fort on the banks of Vishwamitra

(Bassantar) river and his descendants were known as Mankotias.

From the same dynasty Raja Vajradev ruled Jammu for 70 years and died in 1164 A.D. He had two sons namely Brij Dev and Ram Dev. Both the brothers were dauntless warriors and they performed many daring deeds in battles fought by Prithvi Raj Chauhan, when Prithvi Raj ordered them to conquer Kangra they conquered Kangra principality for Prithviraj but the latter entrusted Kangra to Ramdev and some territory to Brij Dev. Prithviraj Chauhan also honoured Brij Dev with the title "Rai-Hameer" and lateron he came to be known as Raja Hammer Roy.

Later, Hameer Roy had strained relations with Prithvi Raj and when Mohammad Gouri invaded India for the second time Hameer Roy sided with him and fought against Prithvi Raj Chauhan. But Hameer Roy (Brij Dev) was killed.

Raja Maldev the founder of Present Jammu (1361-1400 A.D.)

After the death of Prithviraj Chauhan Narsing Dev of Jammu captured a huge territory of Punjab. He died in 1257 A.D. and his son Arjuna Dev ascended the throne. His grandson Maldev was a tall and powerful ruler who ascended the throne in 1361 A.D. and shifted back the capital again to Jammu from Babore. He is the hero of several legends and ballads of the Dogras. Raja Mal Dev is believed to have brought a big stone from the river Tawi and placed it at the spot where it lies even this day in the Kali Janni, Mohalla. He gathered his Kinsmen and other people and appointed himself Raja, sitting on that rock which long afterwards served as the sacred place where every new king celebrated his Raj Tilak. Thereafter, this Rajput colony was treated with greater respect by the country people around and by While other castes such as Meghs, Dooms etc. and several other new comers and

temporary inhabitants. Hindus, who had fled from the Muslim rule and migrated from the Punjab either now looked up to Mal Dev as their rightful Lord, Prince and Protector.

This way, Jammu regained its past glory and importance as a capital. A new Mohalla (colony) also came into existence as Kali Janni meaning Black Stone. This huge stone is stated to have been carried by Mal Dev on his palm from Tawi to this spot. By looking at this huge stone one is surprised that how great he was and how he could have carried this stone.

The Purani Mandi buildings (as mentioned by Ganesh Dass Wadhra in Raj Darshini) were erected during his reign but they are extinct now except "Raj Tharha" the building now known as "Amar Kshtriya Rajput Sabha".

Some people say that the huge black stone "Kali Janni" once lay within the precinets of this palace which was also known as Mal Dev Ki Mandi.

With the passage of time Mal Dev extended his Kingdom on all sides. He conquered territories in the east upto the river Beas and ravaged and plundered the plain region many kms south of Sialkot.

The Dogras may have been forced to offer nominal allegiance to the Sultans now and then, but mostly they asserted their independence and Amir Timur was informed in 1399 AD that the inhabitants of Jammu region were not submissive and obedient only to Sultans of India.

Amir Timur's invasion

Amir Timur had occupied Delhi on 17th December 1398 after routing the Tughlak troops in a battle on the eve of which he had mercilessly ordered the slaughter of one lakh Hindu Captives in chains. But when he learnt that Hindus of Shivalik hills are determined to carry a holy war against

him, he left for the hills and reached the neighbourhood of Jammu via Kangra. On the way, he conquered several forts and ultimately pitched his tents near Mansar. One of the forts he conquered belonged to Thalora-Babore and the people there were disarmed and about 40 Hindus were ordered to serve Timur's Treasurer which the people resisted out of disobedient rebellious spirit. Timur ordered a general assault on the Fort which was stormed and its inhabitants annihilated. Two thousands thus perished or were made prisoners and buildings were levelled with the ground.

Here Timur was informed that the castle of Jammu was near. On his way he encamped on the Bank of balol nallah possibly near Kalu Chak as Timur descended along it from the rugged hills to the fertile plain through which he marched to Jammu.

On reaching Jammu he encamped on the bank of Tawi river but he evaded a direct fight with the people of Jammu. The Rai with a force of bold and fearless men had taken his stand in a strong position on the mountains where they discharged their arrows and kept on shouting like dogs baying the moon. Timur was not in a mood to fight a pitched battle as his soldiers burdened with spoil of Hindustan and in addition, he was inhurry to return back to his country as he had received the news of a rebellion brewing up in the eastern parts of his empire. He therefore, adopted a cunning strategy to defeat the Jammu Raja.

Mal Dev's Conversion

He ultimately defeated the Jammu Raja and captured fifty Rajputs alongwith Raja Mal Dev. The Jammu Raja who was wounded, was presented before Amir Timur. Timur offered him his life if he agree to pay certain sums of money and become a "Musulman". Mal Dev agreed. Amir Timur ordered him to be taught the creed and he repeated it and

became a Muslim. Among the infidles there is no greater crime and abomination than eating the flesh of cow or killing a cow, but he ate the flesh in the company of Muslims.

The fact of Mal Dev's conversion to Islam under compulsion cannot be ruled out. During these centuries and after such conversions of rulers at the point of sword were usual. But Mal Dev seems to have abjured as soon as the invader had crossed the Indus. During these centuries of their struggle with the Muslims, Hindus rulers had learnt to play such game of conversion under compulsion as a matter of policy and to come back to their religion by performing "Prayshchitta" laid down for such cases.

But Dogra Folk Ballads give a different version of Mal Dev's role in conversion. In one of the legends it is narrated that Mal Dev organised a confederacy of Rajas against Timur and fought the invaders in defending Kangra and died there a heroic death.

The reign of Suraj Bansi Raja Mal Dev is a glorious chapter of the history of Jammu which makes him the hero. He left behind strong and well established principality to his son and successor, Hamir Dev (1400-1423 A.D.). He was a valiant king and Akbar recognised him as the head of the 22 hill principalities of this reign. Akbar the Great also bestowed on him a robe of honour.

After the death of Hamir Dev his son Raja Ajaib Dev got the throne. According to Tarikh-i-Ferishta he fought a bloody battle with Tatar Khan, Governor of Lahore and annexed the fort of Sialkot.

Apostle of Justice and peasants hero Bawa Jitto lead a peasants revolt during the reign of Ajaib Dev (1423-1454 AD) and sacrificed his life. (See chapter II, Other shrines I)

Thereafter, Bairam Dev ascended the throne but his

administration run under the guardianship of Hasildev who was also the Prime Minister. After the death of Bairam Dev, his son Ghoghar Dev ruled Jammu and later Kapur Dev (1530-1571 A.D.), Jagdev (1571-1594 A.D.), Sangram Dev (1594-1626 A.D.), Hari Dev (1656-1692 A.D.), Gajay Singh (1692-1707 A.D.) and Dhruv Dev (1707-1733 A.D.) continued to extend the territories Jammu Raj

Maharaja Ranjit Dev (1733-1782 A.D)-The apostle of Justice, Chivalry and Administration.

In 1733 A.D. Ranjit Dev ascended the throne. He was valliant, intelligent and far sighted. His era was of prosperity and he was a man of secular values. A mosque at Mastgarh in walled city of Jammu was got built by him. He also imposed a ban on Sati Pratha (immolation of the wife on the pyre of her husband) and female infanticide. He was apostle of Justice and according to Rajdarshini, Once a washerman went to the bank of river Tawi in routine. At noon, his wife cooked food and carried it from home to his husband. As soon as he ate it, he died. People suspected the said woman of administering poison and approached Maharaja. Thereupon the Maharaja ordered this matter to be thoroughly investigated and enquiries were made from his relatives and neighbourers about the conduct of the washerman's wife. In this affair the Prince's opinion was that the said woman was free from and pure of carnal vices and was safe from debased contaminations.

As skillful understanding and God given wisdom is the basis of justice and equity, so far sighted Maharaja comprehended and by the piercing insight got the truth. He issued the order that they should closely examine the spot where the washerman's wife had deposited the food after carrying it from home. Accordingly, the investigators searched on all sides in the neighbourhood and found near

it a poisonous snake lying dead under a stone on which ant's had collected and from that spot they got to the stone where bread was left by the washerman's wife.

Being apprised of the facts they submitted that from the contamination of the poison of the snake lying under stone nearby, poison had penetrated the bread. The said woman therefore, was acquitted of the mire of blemish. The annals of justice and equity of the Maharaja spread far and wide and this Maharaja was Ranjit Dev.

This was the justice of Maharaja Ranjit Dev and he was ruler-known for his justice and impartiality. His court was homely and his demeanour simple so that everyone, even the humblest had the easy access to the King.

After ascending to the throne of Jammu Raj in 1725 A.D. (For source see Bibliography "3", Page 201-206) Ranjit Dev claimed supermacy over a number of principalities situated not only between the river Ravi and the Chenab but also on other sides of these rivers. Besides this area, his influence extended over much wider area in the hills and plains between the Jhelum and the Bias rivers.

Jammu, under Maharaja Ranjit Dev became the largest state in the northern hills. The tradition attributes subjection to him of twenty two hill principalities eleven to the west of Ravi and eleven to the east of it which includes Kangra, Guler, Chamba, Nurpur, Mandi, Kahlur and Siba. The other ten states of Jammu groups including Bahu, Bhoti, Reasi, Akhnoor, Samba, Mankot, Tirikot, Dalpatpur, Lakhanpur and Jasrota had been annexed to Jammu.

In addition to the hill country, many adjoining tracts of the Punjab plains also formed part of his kingdom.

These included Daoltnagar, Karianwala, Almgarh, Mai Khokhran and Tanda Muta Villages of Gujarat pargana and Manawar and Behlolpur. The villages in Sialkot, tracts of

Ban, Arniya and Kathua and parganas of Pasrur, Hamirgarh and Zafarwal, Mandi Khel and Chanari upto the waters of Ravi were in his sphere of occupation.

The year 1775 and after saw Ranjit Dev at the pinnacle of power. With the death of Raja Ghummad Chand Katoch of Kangra in that year he had been left supreme in the hills from Jhelum to Bias rivers and the adjoining plain. The death of Ahmad Shah Durrani in 1773 had already left home an independent Chief, sovereign over all these regions and principalities.

The grandeur of his power had echoes in the portals of the imperial court of Delhi and the Mughal Emperor Shah Alam II was pleased to issue a total rescript recognising "Raja-i-Rajaha-Raja Ranjit Dev" as Raja of Jammu and his allegiance to the throne of Delhi which was more than nominal and conventional.

Thus Ranjit Dev had reached the acme of fame by the middle of the seventies of the eighteenth century.

Maharaja, Ranjit Dev is famous not only for his justice and chivalry but also for his administrative ideas. Very scanty information on Ranjit Dev's system of civil administration is available from the existing sources although several contemporary and contemporaneous writers have showered praises on him for his lofty ideals, impartiality, religious toleration, wise administration and paternal character inspired by high ethical values for which he deservedly acquired the character of a just and wise rulers.

The Maharaja hold the administration of the Jammu State himself who was the feudal lord and claimed allegiance of all subjects and chiefs of principalities under him. He administered justice, led armies, directed military operations and expeditions.

In the administration of Jammu territory Ranjit Dev was

assisted by a number of high officials some of whom have been mentioned in the records. The foremost among them was the "Wazir". There was also a Superitendent of the Raja's household, who managed the affairs of the court and palace.

There was a 'kul purohit' who wielded great influence over the king. The king perhaps consulted him on ecclesiastical affairs. It was only to the priest that the king paid a personal visit. The well known scholar and dogri poet Dev Dutt was probably the family priest.

The Yuvraj or the heir apparent also helped the ruler in state affairs. He was usually present beside the king in the Durbar and often held Durbar and distributed justice himself in the absence of the king. He led armies also.

There was a Diwan for dealing with revenue affairs and main source of income was land revenue which was one fourth of the gross produce. Octroi tax on merchandise and trade was another main source in addition to the usual tribute from the subordinate principalities.

Apart from the home district of Jammu, rest of the kingdom was parcelled out into various hereditary principalities and grants or Jagir.

The administration of Jammu, the capital city, was entrusted to an official called Kotwal who policid the locality. He was a high police official assisted by subordinates and constables.

The official corruption was universally rampant and Jammu officials were no exception. But their oppression was kept in check by the liberal and just ruler who extracted praise from all as a man of great ability, force of character and administrative talent. It was usual for Ranjit Dev to ride a horse through the streets and listen personally to the complaints of the people. This practice might have restrained the Jammu officials from perpetuating

oppression on the citizens. The administration was so good that British intelligence had to inform the Government in Delhi that no other people from attack to Delhi live more than those of Jammu Kingdom.

A struggle for succession to the throne started in 1774 in the very life-time of Ranjit Dev. His eldest son Raja Brij Raj Dev waged a war against his brother Dalil Dev. However, after the death of Ranjit Dev Brij Raj Dev being his heir ascended the throne. Later, Sampuran Dev, the son of Brij Raj Dev ruled the state for ten years and Mian Mota managed the affairs of the State. Mian Mota was an efficient administrator and he carried the administration successfully. With the death of Sampuran Dev his cousin Jeet Singh ascended the throne but he was also a weak ruler and of unsound health. Later, with the death of Mian Mota Jammu came directly under the Sikh Rule. In the meantime, Gulab Singh had entered the services of Maharaja Ranjit Singh and rendered such distinguished service that Maharaja conferred on him the principality of Jammu with the hereditary title of Raja and gave him the traditional Rajtilak at Jiapota on the banks of river Chenab at Akhnoor.

Gulab Singh: Founder of Jammu & Kashmir

The credit for creation and consolidation of Jammu and Kashmir state goes to Maharaja Gulab singh. This state will ever remain a monument of his political and diplomatic skill and military genius, and its Himalayan territories will always stand as an immortal memorial of his great General Wazir Zorawar Singh, who cheerfully bore the privations of hardships of lofty mountains for sake of the honour of his master and the Dogra land.

Gulab Singh was a very remarkable statesman; the very best of soldiers, bold and energetic, yet wise of prudent commander relying much on his subtle political talent and

looking at arms as his last recourse. In the field of battle he was self-composed, watchful and prudent to the last degree. Even the British Governor General 'Haradinge' admitted that as a soldier, he is brave and has no personal vices.

Once Ranjit Singh sent Gulab Singh to defeat Asghar Khan in the hills comprising of Rajouri. He took 150 companies with him but Asghar Khan remained hidden for some time. At last, he was imprisoned. During his imprisonment at Bahu Fort once Gulab Singh asked Asghar Khan about his daily necessities. Khan replied that he has got every facility provided by you but only, I need is a small mosque to offer Namaaz. At this Maharaja Gulab Singh built the mosque just outside the fort which was a symbol of secularism.

ACCERDITION OF KASHMIR

Before Gulab Singh, Kashmir remained a separate principally always, but it was Gulab Singh who included Kashmir into his territories by an agreement and Ladakh and Tibet after a war. When Sikhs were defeated in the first Anglo-sikh war (1845-46) and Gulab Singh played an important role in bringing about an honourable settlement for the Lahore durbar and the British Governor General, the latter confirmed him the ruler of the area in his possession and added Kashmir valley to his dominion by an agreement of March 16, 1846 and thereby acknowledged him the Maharaja of the newly created Jammu and Kashmir State.

ZORAWAR SINGH & CONQUEST OF LADAKH

Wazir Zorawar Singh, who earned undying fame for his conquest of Ladakh and his invasion of Tibet, was a native of Kussal near Reasi. He was remarkable among his contemporaries for his absolute financial honesty. He never

accepted a present from any body and whatever was given to him he sent to Gulab Singh.

In the beginning of 1834, Zorawar Singh who was a Hakim of Kishtwar on behalf of Gulab Singh had wished to extend his conquests towards the north. He got a pretext when in 1834, the Raja of Timbus, secretly sought the help of Wazir Zorawar Singh against his overlord Tse Pal of Ladakh. Thereupon, the Dogra General marched towards Ladakh with four or five thousand men. The dogra troops marched from Kishtwar and entered the Ladakh territory through the pass at the head of suru valley, where on August 16, 1834, they were opposed by the Boti leader Mangal, (Man-gyal) the young Minister of Tog-Ladakhis. 5,000 in number were dislodged from their position and driven back. The wazir occupied Suru valley and constructed a small castle there.

Later, in the mid winter of 1835, dogra troops occupied some parts of Ladakh namely, shergol, Mulbil, Kharbu and Lama Yuru etc. A fort was constructed at Leh. As early as the beginning of 1835, Zorawar got an opportunity to interfere in Balti affairs when Mohammad Shah, the ruler of Iskardu had sought shelter in Zorwar Singh's camp at suru.

CONQUEST OF ISKARDU AND LHASA

Afterwards, when Zorawar had arrived in Zanskar on his way to quell the Ladakhi revolt led by one Sukamir during the winter of 1840-41 he wrote a letter to Ahmad Shah informing him that his son who had sought the Maharaja's protection had been forcibly carried off by a party, who had invaded the Ladakhi territory and that unless the Prince was sent back again, the Dogra troops would enter Balti to force his release. To this letter, Ahmad Shah designed no reply.

Consequently, after punishing the Ladakhi rebels, the

Wazir fitted out an expedition for Iskardu consisting of 15000 troops. After few days battle, the Fort of Iskardu was surrendered by Ahmad Shah for want of water only.

Later in 1841, Zorawar marched for his historic and famous Tibetan expedition with his army comprising of Baltis, Ladakhi's, Kishtwari's and Dogras in three columns.

This way the creation of Jammu & Kashmir with Ladakh and Tibet raised the heads of Dogra's under Maharaja Gulab Singh and General Zorawar Singh.

J&K UNDER MAHARAJA RANBIR SINGH

Whereas Gulab Singh was a great conquerer, his son Ranbir Singh proved himself as a great consolidator because since emergence of Jammu, after Jamwant in the pre-historic era no ruler was able to rule over whole of the region. It was only Gulab Singh, who conquered all adjoining principalities ruled by different rulers and founded a new state of Jammu & Kashmir. It was thus towards the end of the 19th century that the Jammu and Kashmir State came into its present shape extending from chitral in the north to Kathua in the south and AKSAICHIN in the east to "Kohala" in the west. The state thus became the most important frontier region of India.

Maharaja Gulab Singh was succeeded by his only surviving son Ranbir Singh, whom Gulab singh nominated as the Maharaja of J&K during the last days of his life. But he actually ascended the throne in 1857, the year of Mutiny, after the death of Gulab Singh.

Ranbir Singh, born in August 1630 with a silver spoon in his mouth was destined to share the gravest misfortunes of his father during the year 1845 when Jammu and Kashmir was invaded by Sikh armies of Lahore with a view to annex the whole Dogra Raj and to destroy the "Ulyssis

of Jammu hills" Gulab Singh, Ranbir Singh defended Ramnagar and Uttar Behani which he had inherited from his uncle Raja suchet Singh, with the help of Wazir "Ratnu" and colonel Bija Singh till he was ordered by Gulab Singh to withdraw to Jammu. Ranbir Singh had passed his early youth in the company of his father and took part in several of his campaigns. This together with the thorough training given to him by his father in many arts made him a professional soldier and an efficient commander.

DURBAR MOVE

The State of J&K was formed in 1846 by tagging together three regions of Jammu, Kashmir and Ladakh which had existed as separate countries for centuries before their integration into one unit and had undergone different political and administrative experiences. Although Jammu had been ruled for a long time, except for decades of direct sikh rule, by its own rulers.

Maharaja Gulab Singh had liked to shift to Srinagar for some time during summer months, but Ranbir Singh seems to have instituted the practice of the move of the Maharaja's court and offices to Srinagar every year during summer and sometimes less often, for a few months to avoid the heat of the lower land and partly that the affairs of Kashmir may be looked into more closely and that the people of Kashmir may have a shorter journey to reach the court if business draws them to it.

He built the complete royal palace by the side of river Tawi known as Mubarak Mandi or Durbar Garh. The Palace, presently also known as old Secretariate and housing the State Government offices, was initially built by Maharaja Gulab Singh. Only "Gole Ghar" building is stated to be built before Gulab Singh but was renovated to the royal Glory by Ranjit Singh. The complex which has been badly destroyed by fires and lack of proper care is beautifully

situated at the top of Jammu City. It has three large gates and if all the gates are closed no outsider can enter the Palace. The Palace is a great show of ancient art of architecture and Dogra culture and if it is repaired and opened to public as a historical monument, it can attract a large number of tourists.

Maharaja Ranbir Singh also built a Palace in Srinagar for summer move of durbar.

He also gave great attention to the road communication network and constructed many roads including the famous "Banihal Cart Road" (B.C. Road) linking Jammu with Srinagar. In 1880, he appointed Mr. Alexander Atkinson as engineer and entrusted him with the construction of Kohala Baramulla road.

Maharaja Ranbirsingh is still known for his achievements in different fields as he was not only a ruler, but also a good statesman as well as best administrator. He always maintained good relations with all the hilly Rajas of adjoining states. A part from this, dealing with British Government was also a check and it was only during his reign that the British resident was appointed in the area of Leh, Iskardu etc. He dealt with all the policy matters with great diplomacy and skill. Many new rules for administration were framed and a special department was set up to look after the administration.

JUDICIAL ADMINISTRATION

Maharaja Ranbir Singh was a great Justice lover and always felt himself responsible to the god for the care of his people. He inherited a system of Justice which was once quite medieval, insufficient and arbitrary. The rule of law and Justice was virtually unknown to the public. For the first time in the history of the State, civil and criminal laws were codified. Initially, a penal code was drawn upon the lines of Mcaulay's Code which contained one hundred

sections only. It was published in Dogri and Persian Languages and was called "Ranbir Dand Bidhi". The Maharaja also caused after due delibrations, a criminal code to be prepared consisting of 203 sections with punishment, for each offence, differing in spirit very little from the Indian Penal code. Similarly, a civil code called "Zabita-I-Diwani" was also drawn up and got published. A separate code for state forces entitled `(Jangi Ranbir Dand Bidhi)' was also promulgated.

This complex of codes with later amendments, still forms the nucleus of law and Judicial procedure operating in the state and is known as "Ranbir Penal Code, R P C". To place the ministration of Justice on a sound footing, a "High Court" with defined powers was established in the state in 1877, known as `(Adalat-ul-Alia)'.

INTRODUCTION OF P & T

For the first time in J&K, Maharaja introduced post offices with facilities of telegrams and money orders besides speedy delivery of letters. Postal stamps were introduced in 1881, and offices were set up at Udhampur, Banihal, Verinag, Gilgit etc. One pie post card were introduced in 1882. This helped the people as well as Raj Durbar employees to convey their messages to their relatives under a proper postal system.

SOCIO CULTURAL ATTAINMENTS

He sought to ameliorate the lot of the most unfortunate position of society and to discourage "Sati" and "Infanticide" which were the most henious social evils of that time. On the other side, the brisk literary activity during his personal interest and care & vigour from his personal interest and care about this aspect of the cultural life of the people of the state. Thousands of rare manuscripts in different languages were collected and translated. Literary

centres at Jammu, Srinagar, Uttar Behani and Purmandal were established. A largest manuscript library known as "Ragunath Mandir Sanskrit Sangrahalaya" was also established besides many other libraries and Pathshalas at different places.

Prince of Wales college presently known as G.G.M. Science college was also established during his reign but education system in the college could not be provided.

RELIGIOUS APPROACH

Dharmarth Trust was formed by him and set on well organised firm basis during the last year of his reign. He wished to convert Jammu into Kashi and so built many temples in Jammu, Srinagar, Uttar Behani and Purmandal. Famous Ragunath Temple, foundation of which was laid by his father was also completed. Shri Gada dharji, Ragunath Temple of Anant Nag, Biji Bihara, Pampur, Martand (Mattan) and Muzaffarbad in Kashmir were also constructed besides Gulab Singh Samadhi at Ram Bagh Srinagar.

In Jammu a famous Ranbireshawaram Temple in the city centre was constructed which is dedicated to Lord Shiva and is on imposing edifice raised on a lofty square platform below which are two storeyed rooms for 'Poojaris' and Pilgrims. The whole temple is marked by an elegant design and a huge lingam surrounded by a dozen Billaor (crystal) lingams. The famous "Mahamaya" temple near Bahu Fort was also constructed by him after he saw the Goddess in a dream at that place.

BRITISH CONSPIRACY TO DEPOSE MAHARAJA

The name of Maharaja Ranbir Singh will ever remain in the minds of the people of Jammu & Kashmir. Ranbir Singh Pura (R.S.Pura) a city named after him besides Ranbir Library, Ranbireshwaram temple, Ranbir Higher

Secondary School and Ranbir Kendriya Sanskrit Vidhyapeeth will always remind the people, his different talents in the field of Education, administration and religion. Ranbir Penal Code (R P C) of Justice is one of his remarkable achievements.

Credit of Converting Jammu into "City of Temple" goes to him and his religious zeal can easily be assessed. A large number of tourists and pilgrims visit the city of temple-Jammu to see that Jammu has something extra ordinary and so it is the most peaceful part of the country.

However, with the death of this great ruler, in 1885, the golden era of J&K also passed away. Although his son and successor Partap Singh, who ascended the throne after the death of Ranbir Singh tried his best to carry on with the policies and programmes of his father, many conspiracies to depose him shook him as well as the state of Jammu & Kashmir.

No doubt, he was not less than his father in any field but he had a tough time with the British Indian government. In order to secure direct control over the state, they appointed a Resident who wielded unlimited powers over the administration. A conspiracy to depose the Maharaja came into light well in time. The British were able to involve the brothers of Maharaja Partap Singh, namely Ram Singh, Amar Singh and Lachman Singh in their conspiracy against the Maharaja. But ultimately they found it almost impossible to secure the powers in administration of the state and the "Dogras" emerged as great patriots.

During his regime, Education was modernised and several schools in Jammu and Srinagar were opened. The colleges, one in Jammu and one in Srinagar were also opened. The famous "Prince of Wales" College. Jammu (now G G M Science College) started functioning in 1905 after the arrival of the Prince of Wales in Jammu.

Hospitals and dispensaries were opened and different

towns of the State were provided with the free medical facilities. The valley of Kashmir was linked with the rest of the country by two cart roads, one between Srinagar and Rawalpindi (now, Pakistan) and another between Jammu and Srinagar. Several other roads were constructed to link various towns with the cities.

With the spread of Education and faster communications between the State and rest of the country, there began a ferment among the people and they became conscious of their economic and political stagnation.

POPULAR STRUGGLE

In the early twenties of this century, the discontentment surfaced with political demand voiced by a few leaders in the State. They were, no doubt, influenced by the Indian National Congress under the leadership of Mahatma Gandhi and Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru. But the abortive agitation was ruthlessly suppressed by the Maharaja.

In 1925, the Maharaja died. As he had no son, his nephew Hari Singh son of Amar Singh ascended the throne and became the last Maharaja of Jammu & Kashmir State.

TOWARDS DEMOCRACY

Hari Singh will always be remembered as great patriot and lover of his birth place "Jammu". However, he could not in a short time, make any headway towards grant of responsible Government to the people of the State. The political and economic situation was deteriorating fast and it was, therefore, not difficult for the agitating leader Sheikh Mohammad Abdullah and his small band of devoted workers to launh a mass movement against Maharaja's autocratic rule.

This was met with force-wholesale arrests, firing by the

police and military and levy of punitive fines. But ultimately, Maharaja Hari Singh had to yield and set up a Legislative Assembly with very limited legislative and executive powers.

This did not satisfied the leaders and the movement for a democratic set up gained impetus with the formation in 1938 of the All Jammu & Kashmir National Conference. Baba-I-Kowm, Sheikh Mohammad Abdullah emerged as a leader on the political scence of the state.

The struggle for democracy in the State got further momentum as India got freedom in August 1947. Two months later in October 1947 when an armed attack from the newly formed Pakistan was launched on the defenceless people of the state to force its outright annexation. The raiders from Pakistan occupied a portion of the state and the people realised that this would soon put an end to the hopes they cherished.

HISTORIC DECISION

Being unable to stop the Pakistan aggression, the Maharaja decided to invite the Indian army to repulse the Pakistani attack. Within days, the Indian army alongwith the army of Maharaja were able to stop the Pakistani aggression. Then, the Maharaja of J&K Hari Singh declared that J&K will remain as a state of India but with special powers under article 370 of the constitution. As Hari Singh knew that J&K was a backward state and its people poor he requested Pandit Jawahar Lal Nehru to give special status to J&K so that the interests of the people of his loving land of Jammu & Kashmir were fully secured. The Prime Minister Mr. Nehru agreed and J&K was merged with India with special status whereas Maharaja Hari Singh left the State forever to live in self exile. Till his death he never came into J&K but his love for his native place can easily by Judged as he wished that his body be cremated

on the banks of river Tawi and the remains of his body be immersed in the river Tawi whereas most of the people cremate the dead bodies and perform last rites at Haridwar. Hari Singh gave great importance to Tawi in comparison to Ganga river. His love for the land was great and immortal.

On the otherside working committee of the National Conference decided that the future of the State lay with India and approached the Govt. of India for help and whole heartedly supported the accession of the State by the Maharaja to the India Government which (Instrument of Accession) was signed by Maharaja Hari Singh and Lord Mountbetten on October 26, 1947).

The history of the valiant deeds of the Dogras as well as personnel of the Indian armed forces in fighting the invaders and saving the state from the fury of tribal raiders and Pak forces is common knowledge. Ultimately a cease fire was brought about with the good offices of the United Nations.

When, following the cease fire in 1949, Pakistan refused to honour the inter-national agreements to vacate its aggression, the people of the state set up the constituent Assembly elected on the basis of the universal adult franchise. The assembly ratified the accession of the state to India. Since then Pakistan has not only been in illegal occupation of a large chunk of the State territory but has used all sort of tactics, communal incitement, infiltration of armed personnel and even war to undo this accession.

Monuments and the Dogra Architecture

The history, culture and importance of the erstwhile principalities can be gauged from the numerous forts, Palaces, ancient shrines and other structures that are still standing. There are several such monuments and well known forts and palaces in Jammu region. Among the

famous forts and palaces of Jammu region, Bahu Fort, Poonch Fort, Rajouri Fort, Jaganu fort, Krimchi Fort (only a part of awall exists), Mohoregarh Fort and Ramnagar, Basohli and Jammu Palace etc. are notable. Since scholars have largely tended to ignore these forts and palaces, it is difficult to discuss their history. Moreover, a few individuals have worked in this field and thus enabled us to learn some interesting facts about these.

Few archaelogical remains uniformly spread from River Ravi to the Chenab and northward to inner mountains besides those of chamba and Kangra Hills belong to the early medieval ages when the Dogras had not yet appeared in the Shivalik hills. The highly developed stage of these monuments presuppose a long history of evolution which goes for into the hoary past since when these hills were occupied by a non-Dogra people not yet identified, the authors of this architecture. These hills were thus inhabited by a civilised people who have left traces of their existence in Jammu State. The Dogras must have inherited this tradition in art and architecture and carried it on to the latest eras.

During the Dogra period a number of monuments were erected at Basohli, Jammu and the regions around them. The Baradari at Purani Mandi was erected by Raja Maldev in about 1380 A.D. Tradition has to convey the information that the material for its construction was brought from Pathankot after that town had been conquered and sacked by Maldev.

Maharaja Ranjit Dev, the last effective ruler of the Dev Dynasty, seems to have taken special interest in erecting monuments. His reign is marked by the construction of Haveli Begum buildings meant for the residence of the Mughlani Begum, the widow of the Mughal Governor of Punjab, Mir Muin-ud-Din, the Mastgarh mosque at jammu while the Panchbhaktar Shiva temple near Kanak Mandi,

Jammu were built by Raja Malgar Dev.

Maharaja Ranjit Dev also commenced the building of the present "Palace" known as Mubarak Mandi or Durbargarh Palace, where in the times of his father some miserable huts stood. In addition to this he also finished the construction of "Bahu Fort" which was commenced by Gulab Dev in the beginning of Dhruv Dev's reign.

Basohli was another centre of Dogra architecture. The royal Palace of the Balawaria Princes which is in decayed condition now, was built in the Mughal architectural style. It contained the court hall, Shish Mahal, Rang Mahal etc. Raja Bhupat Pal, founder of Basohli was also the founder of this Palace. His successors made additions to it in their own times. Mahendra Pal added the Rang Mahal and Shish Mahal which were decorated with mural paintings depicting the Nayika and other erotic themes. Now, these paintings have disappeared. The importance of the Palace lies in the fact that it figures in a number of Basohli miniatures. Now this Palace which was once seven storeyed has turned into a massive ruin and there is very little to show that it was once a maginificant building so brought to completion and decorated by Raja Amrit Pal that it was regarded as one of the wonders of the hills of Jammu. Its square turrets, open and embattled parapets, projecting windows, chinese roofed baconies and a moak like tank in front presented a general appearance which, without entering into specific detail reminds one of the same Palaces of their times in England, France, Germany etc.

In addition to the Palace, Basohli has two Shiva temples and some rock cut caves on the Ravi bridge, one of which is called "Vishveshwara" gufa.

There is in the cave a human figure on the wall 6 feet 2 inches high. Tradition identifies this stature with "Vishwakarma" the founder of Basohli.

The Bhimgarh Fort at Reasi, Mohoregarh Fort, Jaganu and Krimchi Forts, Ramnagar & Chenani Palaces besides several others are also remnants of the early Dogra architecture.

The meagre information available on the Dogra antiquities does not help us form an appreciable estimate of the Dogra style of architecture if it ever was evolved. No thorough study of monumental remains of early Jammu Kings has so far been made.

The ancient monuments found in Chamba and Kishtwar and to the west of the chenab were erected by Kashmiri architects in their style. But in Jammu and Basohli areas no traces of Kashmiri influence can be seen. Rather it was a style which emerged independently and was perhaps introduced there by the "Durgaras" who occupied the Jammu Shivaliks in or before the 18th Century A.D. The ancient monuments at Babor, Kirmchi, Sudh-Mahadev and Billawar may even be attributed to the early Dogras, then called the "Durgaras".

BAHU FORT : NUCLEUS OF DOGRA HISTORY

Bahu Fort is easily the most famous among the Jammu forts. Situated on the left bank of the Tawi river, it is an ancient structure which finds mention in several old books, including the Malfuzat Timuri, written by Amir Timur. According to tradition Bahu was founded by Raja Bahulochan, elder brother of Jumbulochan much before the advent of "Kaliyug". The fort and town of Bahu stand due east of Jammu overlooking river Tawi which flows through the city. In ancient days Bahu was the capital of Jammu until the 11th century.

Some historians believe that Bahulochan and Jambulochan, descendants of Lord Rama came to the region from Ayodhya (UP) after defeating Chandra Has, ruler of that area. They constructed the Fort and founded

the city of Bahu. Bahulochan was later killed in a battle with the local tribal. Jambulochan succeeded his brother to the throne and founded a new city Jamboo.

However, there are not many who give credence to this view. It is difficult to believe, they say, that Bahulochan and his brother came to this area about 550 years before the advent of "Kalyug". It may be true that they came from Ayodhya, but certainly not that long ago. Historians determine the period to be around the 5th or 6th century AD. The Fort has been renovated several times, the last time probably 200 years ago by Maharaja Gulab Dev.

The fort was vacated by many successive rulers since the capital of this principality had been shifted to Babapura (Present Babore) about 40 kms north of Jammu city. This step was necessitated by the arrival of the Muslim invaders. It was Raja Maldev who shifted the capital back to Bahu, as already discussed and rebuilt the fort at its previous site in about 14th century.

The fort was well-known in early times. Amir Timur, who invaded Jammu in AD 1398 referred to the fort in his book. Much later, a German visitor Baron Charles Hugel, who saw this fort from afar on November 2, 1835, gave an interesting description: "Our course lay over the plain, which is one place I found suddenly invaded by the deep bed of a stream. Whence a hill rises almost impreceptibly on the summit of which Gulab Dev has lately built one fort of Bahu.

It does not speak very favourably of his military judgement, for, however handsome its ornamented walls may look rising as it were out of the river from his place on the other side of Tawi of Jammu; as a strong place, it is quite untenable, being overlooked by other heights most easy of success. From Bahu a spacious flight of steps leads down to the river and another takes the passengers upto Jammu".

After the death of Raja Kapur Dev, the state was divided

into two parts with the Tawi river as the boundary. His son Jagdev held court at Bahu, while the second son Smail Dev ruled from Jammu. This state of affairs continued for a long time till the succession of Raja Hari Dev In 1760. He reunited the states under Jammu. The rulers of Bahu were called Bahuwals and those in Jammu took the name Jamwal.

Mubarak Mandi (Durbargh) Palace

Overlooking river Tawi standing on the top of Jammu city towards north, the ancient Royal Palace of Dogra rulers is towards annihilation. Started in 18th Century A.D. by Maharaja Ranjit Dev, in about 50 years it was finally completed in middle of the 19th century by the founder of Jammu & Kashmir, Maharaja Gulab Singh. During these more than 50 years sucessive rulers continued to add new complexes according to their requirement and it is believed that it had 2000 rooms of which only few hundred remain now.

Covering an area of more than one square km, the Palace has witnessed many ups and downs in its more than 200 year history. Though Maharaja Hari Singh (Father of Dr. Karan Singh), the last Maharaja of J&K shifted his residence in another built Palace 'Amar Mahal' in early this century the royal courts continued to be held in this Palace. A part of the elegant complex previously occupied by J&K High Court remained the offices of J&K Foreign Ministry until 1947.

Also famous as 'Raje Ki Mandi' and old secretariate, the Palace is presently occupied by J&K State Government offices. However, J&K High Court stands shifted to a newly built complex at Janipura and at the time of going this book to the press, lawyers are on strike demanding shifting of the Lower Courts too. After the accession of J&K with India in October 26, 1947, this Palace was converted into

civil secretatiate and in mid seventies, the state Govt. offices and courts moved in after the Secretariate vacated it and shifted in another built building in the heart of walled city.

On the prolonged demand of Jammuites, Archaeological Survey of India declared it as protected Monument and took over the Palace for restoration but nothing has been done to restore this glorious heritage of the Dogras so far. State Government as alleged by Jammuites has always vandalised the Dogra monuments including this palace.

In June 1986, elegant part of the Palace and Ghol Ghar was completely gutted in a devasting fire which destroyed all the records of the offices housed in it but nobody not even ASI could save it from further deterioration and Jammuites blame Kashmiri leaders for their spirit towards all Dogra monuments.

On the other hand ASI has also failed to pacify the ire of Jammuites by not initiating any type of efforts for restoration of the destroyed Ghol Ghar or other portions. While J&K Estates department maintaining the Palace has only acted as Vandal by removing all the Valuables and elegant materials used to beautify the Royal Palace. Even the employees of the department have taken out the brass hinges used in thousands of the doors and windows. To save its skin, the Estates department has declared it as unsafe building but still no efforts have been made to shift the Government offices to other suitable buildings putting the employees of those departments under high risk.

Of the three parts namely Dewan-e-Aam. Dewan-e-Khas and Ghol Ghar only two remains. The facade was destroyed about 30 years ago and later, a complex was raised to ground for construction of new buildings. So far only one has been built accommodating the Government Treasury and Information department. The other structures housing the offices including Divisional Commissioner's office and

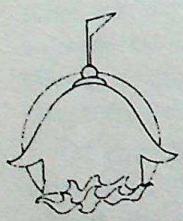
state Archives etc. are crumbling.

However, the 'Dogra art gallery' was shifted in the green hall (previously Assembly hall) of the Dewan-i-Khas, a few years ago and this was due to the personal efforts of some local leaders.

Many places of the palace have become the hide outs of some anti social elements and the beautiful parks inside are being used to dump malba by some people while debris have also been allowed to cumulate inside the palace. What a marvel art it had comments elderly people who have seen it before 1947 and what is its condition now.

What is lamentable, no government organisation has come forward to restore some glory of the Dogra heritage even after the suggestion by local leaders to convert this palace in a museum which is sure to attract the tourists and the pilgrims who either come for a pilgrimage of Mata Vaishno Devi or to see the other tourist resorts of Jammu region.

2 CHAPTER II



HINDU SHRINES

Jammu is no doubtly a pilgrims paradise and millions of pilgrims belonging to different faiths and sects can be seen visiting the shrines of Jammu through out every year. There are different shrines of different Gods, Goddesses and dieties scattered all over the Jammu region. Though Vishnu and his incarnation (Avatara's) shrines can easily be attributed to Dogra rulers who built these temples in 19th century A.D. and thereafter being believers of sun Gods, most of other shrines are fairly old and have many interesting legends related to them.

There is no knowing that how and when the worship of Shiva and Shakti began in Jammu but most of the Shrines of Jammu belong to these Gods in various forms. Moreover, a temple of Jamawant in the city in a cave named 'Pirkhoh' is among the rare shrines. Prominent among other cave shrines are the cave shrine of Mata Vaishno Devi and cave shrine of Lord Shiva in Shiv Khouri. Besides cave shrines, there are river, pond and spring shrines, ancient temple complexes; and Naga shrines etc.

SHIVA SHRINES

Pir Khoh Cave Shrine

In the outskirts of Jammu City, on the Circular road, right below the royal Jammu Palace (Old Secretariat), a cave is known as Jamawant's cave.

River Tawi flows about hundred metres from the cave. This cave shrine is also dedicated to Lord Shiva and is commonly known as 'Pir Khoh' meaning' Cave of the saints.

It is believed that this cave remained Jamawant's abode since he left Ayodhya, after Rama's triumph over Ravna in Treta Yug.

According to legends, Jamawant came to this part of Himalaya's to live rest of his life and choosed this cave for meditation. He established a Shivlingam inside the cave

and remained in the cave until lord Krishna came here in search of a 'Mani'.

It is believed that Jamawant possessed a 'Mani' which scholars believe was nothing else than 'Kohinoor Diamond'.

As the legend goes on, Lord Krishna challenged Jamawant from outside the cave and when Jamawant unaware of Lord Krishna, refused to give his 'Mani', fierce fight took place between the two.

Later, when Jamawant realised that his rival was none other than Lord Krishna, he surrendered and handed over the 'Mani' to Krishana and requested him to also marry his daughter Jamawanti. Lord Krishana accepted the offer and married Jamawanti to make her his eighth queen.

Though Jamawanti's name appears as his eighth queen in the literature related with Lord Krishana but it is not clear that how and when Jamawanti was born and which was Jamawant's wife who gave birth to her. However, some scholars believe that Jamawanti was his adopted daughter as Jamawant had found her lying abandoned near the cave.

Later, Jamawant left this cave after an encounter with Lord Krishna and people of this region missed him and his daughter and thereafter they named this city after Jamawant.

Farishta writes in his history (Trikhe-e-Farishta) that present Jammu was called as 'Jama' around 2nd century A.D. and interestingly there is no mention of Jammu with this name before this period in any book. However, some scholars believe that Jammu was named after Jambulochan, a ruler of Jammu. But in the light of historical mention of Jammu as 'Jama' and legends related with Jamwant naming of Jammu after Jamawant looks more realistic.

The cave shrine where Jamawant lived is about 20 metres long,2 metres wide. While its average height is about one

metre, it opens in a chamber of about 4 metres by 3 metres with a height of about 2½ metres.

To enter the cave one has to descend some 15 steps as the cave is about 5 metres below the ground level of the temple which itself is on a hill slope. While the main cave is on the right side of the enterance, another part of the cave on the left side opens in a large hall about 3 metres below the main cave.

The main cave has a natural shivlingam but the left side chamber has idols of Jamawant, Lord Vishnu, Lord Shiva, Parvati and Ganesha etc.

The cave is also related with Guru Goraknath who once visited the shrine. He established his seat (Gaddi) here and handed it over to his disciples . Since this place is one of the seats of Guru Gorakhnath his disciples are still maintaining the traditions of the seat and are in control of the shrine.

Thousand of people visit the shrine daily and it is believed that cherished desires of the people are fulfilled.

The legendary cave is perhaps the only in India related with Jamawant after whom Jammu is believed to have been named.

Shiv Khouri Cave

Situated on a hillock about 140 km north of Jammu in Tehsil Reasi near Katra Vaishno Devi, this cave is the longest among other caves shrines in the state. Buses and other traffic go upto Ransoo, the base camp. People have to trek about four kilometres to reach the entrance of the holy cave and the four kilometre long track along a small natural water channel is most fascinating, charming and enjoyable. Water gushing out from hill sides in the shape of small springs makes the atmosphere very pleasant making one to believe that nature is supreme.

About 100 metres long, 1 metre wide and 2 to 3 metre high, natural cave contains a self made Shiv Lingam. According to some people the cave is unending. Inside the cave, the double chamber is quite spacious to accommodate large number of people.

At one spot, the cave divides into two-one of which is believed to lead Kashmir valley. It stands now closed as some Sadhus who ventured to go in, never returned.

To reach the sanctum sanctorum inside the cave, one has to bend, crawl or adjust his body sidewards where about one metre high naturally created image of Shiva is visible. In addition, one finds a number of other natural objects having resemblance with Goddess Parvati, Ganesha and Nandigan etc. The cave roof is etched with snake like formations. Water drips constantly through these on th 'Shiv Lingam' in the cave.

Number of legends have grown around the discovery of this holy cave. According to one, the cave was discovered by a Muslim shepherd who while in search of his missing goat went inside to find to his surprise number of 'Sadhus' engaged in meditation and 'Shivpooja'.

Deeply impressed by the divine power he started pooja there. However, later he disclosed this to other people despite his promise with the sadhus who had advised him not to disclose about them or this cave.

People believe that for spiritual attainment and meditation this is the ideal place. Number of famous saints have been associated with this cave who spent decades inside.

Shivkhouri has gained popularity during past few decades. A 3 day fair takes place annually on the occasion of Maha Shivratri and thousands of pilgrims from different parts of the country visit the cave shrine during Maha Shivratri fair and other festivals.

Sudh Mahadev and Mantalai

About 6000 ft. above sea level and largely covered by thick forests of Pine and Deodar trees, Mantalai is situated about 120 km from Jammu towards north east. The famous hill resorts of Jammu namely Patnitop and Kud etc. are also situated near it. Sudh Mahadev and Mantalai have also appeared on the tourism map of J&K.

Though this place is best known for the headquarters of Aparna Yogasharam of Late Dhirendra Brahmchari, its main attraction is the ancient Shiva temple at Sudh Mahadev and a 2nd Century Trident. It is believed that Lord Shiva had married Parvati at Mantalai.

Thinly populated, this place has a personal airfield, swimming pool, small wild life sanctuary, dairy farm and a castle like Yogasharam of Late Brahmchari. The Brahmchari had planned to develop this place as his personal tourist resort but with his tragic death in a plane crash at Mantalai fate of his plan cannot be guessed at present.

Few people are aware that ancient pottery and other terracotas belonging to an ancient civilisation were found in and around Mantalai in abundance. According to historians this civilisation vanished after the arrival of Aryans. But late Dhirendra Brahmchari closed the doors for further excavation and research by acquiring almost whole of the plateau of Mantalai.

Sudh Mahadev and Mantalai, 8 km from each other, finds mention in ancient Hindu literature including 'Shiv Purana'. Once it was the capital of Raja Himachal, the father of Parvati.

According to legends and ancient Hind literature Parvati had a wish to marry Lord Shiva and she meditated for the hand of Shiva at the sacred place now known as Sudh Mahadev. Devika, a famous and sacred river of Jammu

also originates from Gori Kund only 2 km from Sudh Mahadev and it is believed that Parvati herself flows as river.

How this sacred piaces got this name is very interesting. The spot used by Parvati for meditation was also used by a demo- Sudhanta but both remained unaware of each other for a long time. One day the demon, also a worshipper of Shiva, saw Parvati and tried to molest her. Then Parvati prayed the lord to come for her rescue.

As the legend goes on, lord Shiva living on Kailash, threw his trident the moment Parvati prayed. The trident thrown by Lord Shiva was broken in three pieces after cutting the demon.

In the meantime Shiva also appeared there. As Sudhanta was also Shiva's worshipper. Shiva asked the demon for his last wish. At this the demon Sudhanta highly pleased with the darshana's of Lord Shiva, expressed his desire for naming the place after his name alongwith the name of the Lord. Thus the place acquired a new name Sudh-Mahadev, the joint name of Sudhanta and Mahadeva.

At that sacred spot now stands an old temple with a natural Shivlingam inside. Though reconstructed and repaired for a number of times this temple has many ancient idols excavated from Sudhmahadev. The trident used by Shiva to kill the demon is still lying in the temple.

Fixed in ground near the main temple, all the three pieces of trident of a rare alloy, about 20 cm in dia, are believed to be of 2nd century A.D. according to archaeologists. The historians and archaeologists have also been able to read the two line inscription on one of the pieces.

According to them, inscription is in 'Brahmical dialect' which was in use around 2nd century A.D. and according to the inscription, an orissa king 'Vibhunaga' had put the trident here to commemorate his wisdom over the area.

The spot where shiva married Parvati is in the shape of a small pond/now known as Mantalai near the airfield of Late Brahmchari. A temple also stands near the pond. The presence of God is clearly felt in this area and one feels himself in the abode of Gods while in Sudh Mahadev and Mantalai.

As aparna is one of the names of Parvati that is why the Brahmchari seem to had named this place as Aparnasharam.

Sarai's etc. are available in Sudh Mahadev but visitors may bring with them woolen clothes and blankets etc. as this place remains snow bound for about 6 months in a year.

Budhe Amarnath Shrine

The holy shrine of Budhe Amar Nath Ji nestles in sylvan picturesque surroundings, situated at the feet of high mountains of Pir Panjal range which remains covered with snow for a large part of the year. Beneath the holy shrine flows Lorean Nallash, also known as Pulstya Nallah, which make this place more enchanting and presents a panorama to the eye.

Shri Budhe Amar Nath Ji, the eternal Lord Shiva, manifests himself in the form of a chakmak rock at Rajpura Mandi, 23 kilometres north of Poonch. Unlike other Shiva temples where Lord Shiva is worshipped in the form of a Lingam, the occualiarity of Shri Budhe Amar Nath Ji temple at Mandi is that the Shiva reveals himself here in the form of a white chakmak rock.

The road to Rajpura Mandi takes off from Chandak, 235 kilometres from Jammu and 11 k.m short of Poonch on Jammu-Poonch road.

At Budhe amar Nath Ji the devotees take a dip in a spring which flows beneath the temple for purification and then have darshan as of immortal Lord Shiva and makes

offerings. It is believed that Lord Shiva grants wishes to every one who makes a pilgrimage to Budhe Amar Nath Ji on this auspicious day. It is also said that pilgrimage to Amar Nath remains incomplete without a visit this shrine. According to a legend when Kashmir was in turmoil, the Queen of Loran, Chanderika ould not undertake her annual pilgrimage to Shri Amar Nath Ji at Srinagar. She got dejected and would remain sad. The Queen was a great devotee of Lord Shiva and it was too much for her. She left her food and water and worshiped Lord Shiva the whole day. Lord shiva, it is said was pleased with her dedication and appeared in the form of an old Sadhu with mace in the hand. The Sadhu revealed to the queen that she could have a darshan of shri Amar Nath ji near Mandi by the side of the stream. So, on Raksha Bandan day she arrived at Mandi Rajpura in a procession led by the Sadhu. It is said that the old Sadhu disappeared at the said spot. It was their belief that the old Sadhu was none other than lord Shiva himself, who revealed to the devotees another place of his dwellings. Since then, the place is known as Budhe Amar Nath Ji and is considered highly venerated.

According to another legend, Ravana's grand father Pulastya Rishi had a darshan of Lord Shiva at this place and so the Loran Nullah is also known as Pulastya Nallah. It is also said that during one of his visits to the famous Amar Nath ji cave in Kashmir Lord Shiva had a brief sojourn at the place of present Budda Amar Nath Ji temple at Mandi and started revealing to his consort Parvati the immortal secret story of enternal bliss and immortality. The story later got completed at Amar Nath Ji cave in Kashmir. So both the places are considered to be equally holy and sacred by the devotees. Though the devotees in thousands visit the shrine on Shravan Purnima, heavy rush is witnessed throughout the year.

Kameshwar Temple

Akhnoor, a tehsil head quarter and 28 km towards the West of Jammu is very famous for its Kameshwar Temple and terracotas excavated from different parts of the town. Besides, stone tools of stone age have also been found from this area.

Akhnoor town is situated on the right bank of river chenab and according to legends it was named by Mughal Emperor Jahangir who once called it 'Aankhon Ka Noor' as once Jahangir visited Akhnoor- then called Virat Nagari- on the advice of a Saint when his eyes got infected while returning from Kashmir. Amazingly, Jahangir's sored eyes were completely cured with the fresh air of Akhnoor blowing over Chenab. Then he called this city as "Aankhon Ka Noor" meaning 'light of the eyes".

The Fort where Jahangir is believed to have stayed while in Akhnoor is the second construction at the same place. The present construction is about 300 years old. Now ruined, this fort is very important for archaeologists who have successfully excavated potteries belonging to HARRAPAN Civilization. According to ASI (Archaecological Survey of India) sources, Akhnoor was the last Harrapan city from where they used to collect timber from river Chenab which enters plain, at this place.

Some household items, terracota bangles and stone age tools etc. of Harrapan age and beyond have also been found from this town. Moreover, Budha Heads dating back to 3rd century A.D. are the most important among other terracotas. These life size Terracota Budha heads, presently placed in the Dogra Art Gallery of Jammu reveal that once this place was inhabited by the believers of 'Lord Budha'.

But interestingly, this place was also dominated by the people belongng to Hindu religion which is revealed by a 'Trimurti' idol found from village Ambarran near the town dating back to 9th century A.D. The green colour one piece

stone idol is the most fascinating.

It is interesting that how the religion originated and flourished in this small town. Among the temples of Akhnoor, Kameshwar temple is the most important which is visited by hundreds of people every day. This temple is believed to be related with 'Mahabharta' as temple of the headless body of a chavalier named 'Babrick' is here and the temple of his head is in Rajasthan.

According to legends, Kameshwar (real name Babrick) was a powerful ruler of Kashmir and was so brave that he could alone kill the armies of his enemies. He was the eye witness of the Mahabharta battle as Lord Krishna had chopped off his head to place it on a high altitude to fulfill the desire of Babrick for witnessing the historic battle.

According to legends when Babrick's head was chopped off, his headless body riding the horse returned towards Kashmir. When it reached Akhnoor some ladies on a well saw the headless body on a horse and asked each other about what was it?

The moment, ladies talked about the headless body of Babrick, it fell down from the horse. The place where his headless body fell, is the spot where temple is situated at present.

Body of Babrick is still there in the shape of 'Lingam' which is broken from the top. The original temple is believed to be very old. The old temple remained intact for a long time but later it was completely destroyed.

Few years ago, the temple was rebuilt with the efforts of some local people and it is said that the original temple was so high that Kashmir valley was clearly visible from the top of the temple building, however I don't believe this. The stones and bricks of original temple can still be seen from across the river Chenab.

Here it is interesting that whereas mostly temples are

reached by upstairs this temple has downward steps, about 3 feet below the ground level and looks like a pit from inside the temple.

According to locals it was planned to shift the Kameshwar Lingam' in another built temple on the bank of River Chenab, keeping in view the crumbling structure of the temple. When temple authorities tried to lift the Lingam they could not do so even after excavating the place about 3 feet deep and the Lingam appeared to be still inside the ground. Thereafter it was decided to keep the Lingam at its original place and so the new temple was built. That structure on the bank of Chenab is still lying abandoned without any idols which was built exclusively for the above said Shiv-Lingam.

Inside the temple complex, many ancient stone idols of Ganesha, Lord Vishnu, Lord Shiva etc. are placed around a tree besides Kameshwar Lingam inside the main temple. Though lengendary Kameshwar's temple is the main attraction of Akhnoor, the town is most important for archaeologists and researchers. The fort of Akhnoor has been taken over by A.S.I. for conducting more excavations in its bid to find more informations regarding Harrapans and the periods beyond.

PURMANDAL-KASHI OF THE DOGRAS

Purmandal is a small village about 39kms towards the South-East of Jammu. It is connected with road through which one can easily visit the place by the Vehicular traffic via Birpur (a small village). The place Purmandal enjoys high reputation as a sacred place (Tirtha). Firstly it is most sacred due to the stream DEVIKA which flows at the base of the rocks of the place. The Devika is believed to have appeared on Phalguna Chaturdashi i.e. Shivratri at the end of Dwapura Yuga and so the great importance is attached to a bath in its water on festive or on special sacred days.

According to legend, Rishi Kayshap had performed meditation for a long time to purify the earth dwellers of their sins. When Lord Shiva pleased with his dedicated devotion, appeared before him, he requested the Lord Shiva to purify the sinners. Lord Shiva asked his consort Uma to flow there as Devika and ordained that whoever bathed in this river would be purified. Lord Shiva manifested himself as Lingas at a number of places on the banks of the Devika of which Sudh Mahadev, Udhampur Purmandal and Utterbehni are well known.

As the Devika is believed to flow underground due to which the stream is also known as Gupt-Ganga. The people dig pits in the bed and bath in the water that comes out. Devotees also take away this water with them and use it on every sacred ceremoney.

A big fair held here on every Amavasya, and Chaitra Chaudish, is attended by thousands of people. Even the people residing at far flung places also visit the place on such sacred occassions. Purmandal, sometimes referred to as Chotta Kashi seems to be more sacred because some people immerse the ashes of the departed souls in this stream which according to the Hindu customs should be immersed at Kashi or Haridawar. This is the clear indication of the comparision of Purmandal with Kashi and Haridwar.

Apart from this, some people particularly visit this sacred place to perform the ceremonies related to the departed soul. It is said that "Mahatamya" of performing such type of ceremonies and Sharddhas at this place is therefore equal to that of "Gaya" or "Kashi".

Another sacred attraction of Purmandal is a big ancient Shiva Temple, which has no lingam and is known as "Svayambhuvalinga". A number of stories are associated with this sacred shrine. The Shrine is said to have been .built by Raja Veni Dutt of Kashmir who is identified with

either Vinayaditya or Avantivarman who ruled over Kashmir from 855 to 883 AD. The statue of Jackal at the back of the main shrine becomes an interesting aspect to explore in the light of the popular stories indicating the daughter of king Veni Dutt to be a re-incarnation of the female jackel which was shot in her head by a hunter and had died near the Lingam. The daughter of king Veni dutt is said to have suffered from incurable headache from childhood which could only be removed after the arrow from the skelton of the Jackel at Purmandal was removed which was searched out by the hunting party guided by astrologers. Raja Veni dutt who visited the place accompanied by a number of persons including the family members is said to have worshipped Shiva at Purmandal and built the central shrine. A hooded stone serpent jutting out of a cistern in the rock in the central shrine is an object of religious attraction as it is believed to be the only menifestation of Lord Shiva of that kind any where in the country. Another mystifying phenomenon for the devotees at purmandal is that the cistern remains only half filled with water though thousands of devotees go on pouring water in it over the Hood of snake as a ritual.

The present complex of the shrine was built by Maharaja Gulab Singh and a special provision was made in Ain-I-Darmarth to look after the shrine. Maharaja Ranbir Singh son of Maharaja Gulab Singh and known for his patronage of art and learning, had planned to create a unique centre of pilgrimage where one could have the religious bliss equaling all the religious centres in India. With the religious zeal in the mind, Maharaja Ranbir Singh built numerous temples and shrines. The Bhairva Temple, Kartikya and Ganesha Temple in the Shiva Temple complex of Purmandal were also added by Maharaja Ranbir Singh to make the place as Kashi while constructing the shrines at every step from Purmandal to Utterbehni.

Purmandal was also a centre of Sanskrit learning where great Sanskrit Scholars from the country and abroad were called to develop the Maharaja's desire.

Another attraction of Purmandal is the large number of wall Paintings done extensively on the walls of the old buildings, the theme of the painting is slightly different from the other wall Paintings of Jammu, because mostly paintings in Jammu, are of Ramayana and Krishna theme, but at Purmandal the figures of Shiva, Parvati, Ganesha etc. are painted. Some sculptures are also found from the area. A stone sculputre of Trimurthi found from Purmandal which dates back to 12th century A.D is placed in the Dogra Art Gallery of Jammu.

The fame of Purmandal as a religious centre had been spread far and wide through the ages. Vishnu Purana seems to mention the Purmandal shrine on the bank of the Devika river in one of its verses as "Pur".

A large number of diginities associated with different faiths visited here. Even some Muslim rulers held it in high esteem. It is said that Maharaja Ranjit Singh was also one among the great devotees and had made huge offerings here.

Purmandal seems to be more sacred due to the Devika stream which is considered most sacred in purifying the sinners. (for utterbehni Shiva temples please see chapter sacred rivers, Utterbehni)

Babor Temples

About 30 Km from Udhampur on the Dhar-Udhampur road is a beautiful village Manwal which stands the witness to the antiquity of Jammu. Untill 14th century A.D. this place then called Babapura (now Babore) remained the Capital of Jammu Raj. No doubt Jammu remained Capital in earlier times also but around 8th-9th Century AD the capital was shifted to Babbapura, the town named after

Babruvahan, Legendary son of Arjuna. This step was necessitiated due to continuing invasions by Muslim invaders. (See Chapter Early history for more details)

It was Raja Maldev who shifted back the capital again to Jammu in 14th century A.D. During the period Babbapura (Present Babor) remained capital of Jammu, a number of buildings and temples were built by the rulers and of which ruins of only three temple complexes are there.

There might have been some more though of them little now remains. But what remains is sufficient to indicate what a marvel of art & architecture had been created in this till recently un-known place.

The remains are actually to be found in two adjacent villages of Thalora and Babor but they are now referred to under the common appellation of Babor (Manwal) only. The ruins are structures of great solidity and considerable beauty. Some of the stones and rafters used in their construction are over a dozen feet long and their sculptures and carvings superb.

The three temples identified so far though not with certainty, are the temples of the Devi and her lord Shiva and its period is considered around 10th century A.D. accordingly ASI sources.

The Devi temple has been resorted by the villagers in the neighbourhood for purposes of worship. This temple, a highly ornate structure comprises a single Chamber Sanctury with a "Mandapa" in front. The roof of the Mandapa was held up by fluted columns supporting beams of stone 10 feet in length. The whole structure stood in a courtyard 35 feet by 25 feet. One has to get down to it by a few stone steps as it is lower than the surrounding ground. The sanctum measured seven and a half feet square on the inside though externally it is 20 feet square at the base.

The temple walls are richly carved on the outside with

divine figures and sacred motifs. In between lay niches with stepped up pedimental roofs containing images of Gods and Goddesses. But they are empty now.

The identification of this temple as a Devi shrine is by no means certain, it might as well have been a Shiva Temple or a temple of Shiva and Shakti both.

The other temple most probably the Shiva temple is also elaborately carved with sacred images, motifs and designs. The principal object of worship is a lingam behind which is a niche in the back wall and a beautiful monolithic statue of Shiva-Trimurti with Parvati. The temple appears to be double storied structure with a dome shaped top. The carvings represent besides others, Vishnu reclining on Shesha, Krishna playing on the flute, Narasimha tearing open the entraisl of a demon.

Kaladhera I & II are the two main temples in proper Babore dating back to 10th century AD. Being in ruins these can not be identified as it has no deity inside. As called Kaladhera the temple might have been dedicated to the great god Shiva in his destructive aspect-"Mahakala".

Though ruined, the Kaladhera I is built on an elevated basement it consists of two principal square sancturies with an extensive and elaborately carved Mandapa in front. The roof (now absent) was supported on two rows of 24 fluted columns surmounted with elephant heads etc. The whole edifice lay in a store paved courtyard which extends several feet beyond the temple walls.

Kaladhera-II consists of two temples, debris of which are lying around the one temple of which only elevated Platform remains might have been a Shikhara temple and if so it must be a construction of 2nd-3rd Century.

In contradiction to other historians I believe that the second temple of Kaladhera-II was built in Phases by different rulers in different times as the art of carving of

the front and the rear portion is slightly different. this temple too has no idol or statue but archacologists believe it was a Shiva Temple.

It is a matter of profound regret that nothing could be known about who built these temples and when, exactly. But their donors do not seem to have been keen to remain anonymous.

Mr. R.B. Ram Chandra Kak, a great archaelogist and Prime Minister under Maharja Hari Singh of J&K has noted that these were figures of a bearded male and two armed Female, Clad in a close slinging gown and scarf on the Jambs of the door way to the Devi's Temple. He feels that they may be the donor of the Temple.

Kalahana, the author of famous "Raj Tarangini" has recorded a formal visit to the Kashmir Capital of Kirtidhara, ruler of Babbpura, when in the winter of 1087-88 AD rulers of eight adjoining principalities gathered at Srinagar in response to an invitation from their suzerain, Kalasa. According to this version Kirtidhara might have built the temples, but it is not certain at all.

These temples of Babore are no doubt a marveleous exhibitions of Art and devotion of the ancient times. The Archacelogical Survey of India Department has under taken the restoration of these temples and has successfully maintained the remaining ruins of these ancient structures. It is hoped that Archacologists and historians shall be able in the near future to trace the names etc. of builders of these structures which is the glory of Jammu's past.

Krimchi Temples

About 6 Km from Udhampur, (a district of Jammu) a temple complex at Krimchi village has been taken over by the Archaeological Survey of India for restoration and protection. ASI has declared this temple complex as

protected monument.

Krimchi Temples dates back to about 10th century A.D. according to Archaeologists but the style of construction reveals that these temples were built around 2nd century A.D. However, local people believe that Pandavas built these temples during their exile from Hastinapur.

Krimchi is a small viallage nestled among green hills one of which was crowned with a Fort once. Now only part of a wall of this Fort is visible. The village stands in a beautiful valley of the same name with a small stream flowing below it.

Nearby are three ancient temples in a row facing east. There seem to have been two more parallel to them in the east facing the two temples outside thus completing a quardrangular pattern. But none of these exist-at present.

The main temple is copiously decorated with abstract designs and contains some niches. The temple which is more than 17 metres high stands on a grand entabulature. The temple porch bears a close resemblance to ancient stone temples of Kashmir. However, in shape and style these temples resembles the Baijnath and some other temples in the Kangra valley of Himachal Pardesh and the Lingaraja temples of Orissa.

Some stone slabs used in their construction particularly those used as beams, measure about 4 metres in length and rest on equally massive pillars. The other temples also stood on high plinths with spacious mandapas in front which are reached by a flight of stairs.

It is difficult to say as to whom these temples were dedicated though pieces of sculpture found in the debris have yielded figures of Ganesh, Shiva Trimurti and Vishnu. Who built these temples is still a mystery but local tradition connect them with the Mahabharta warrior, Kechak, who met his death at the hands of Bhima because

he made indecent overtures to Drupadi.

According to another tradition the temples were built in the times of Kanishka (2nd century A.D.) when he was on his way to Kashmir.

In absence of facts, the construction of this temple complex can be attributed to any one but it is almost certain that the period of construction of Babore temples, Krimchi temples, Mahabilvakeshwar temple of Billawar and Mahakali temple in Bahu fort is almost same.

As ASI has taken over all these temple complexes and so it is hoped that archaeologists shall be able to throw more light on these monuments.

Mahabilvakeshwara or Hari Hara Temple

One of the most revered Shiva temples is at Billawar. In ancient times it was known as Hari Hara temple meaning Vishnu and Shiva in one form. The worship of Hari hara form of God was prevalent around 2nd century A.D in India and so this temple can easily be termed as a construction of 2nd century A.D. but archaeologists argue that its construction period is between 8th to 12th century A.D.

Now, this ancient temple is known as Mahabilvakeshwara temple obviously because of the presence of Bilva trees in abundance all around. Bilva leaves, it may be recalled, are offered to Lord Shiva in profusion as the God is believed to be highly pleased with this kind of floral offering.

The temple spire which rises about 20 metre over a square sanctum is ornamented on the outside. It contains a number of images including those of Brahma, Vishnu, shiva, Ganesha and Bhairva besides a Shivlingam. This Shiva Temple is among the oldest shrines of Jammu region.

Maheshwara Temple

Maheshwara temple in Samba town about 40km from

Jammu is also an ancient shrine. As already referred (See Shakti Shrines, Chichi Mata), Raja Sambh worshipped Shiva in this temple and so this temple is also known as Sambeshwara temple.

Erwan Temples

There are number of Shiva shrines in and around Kathua town but most famous of these is Erwan temple near Parol. According to a legend, this temple was erected by King Vikramaditya in the 4th century A.D. But another belief puts it that the temple was built by a legendary hero at Erwan, a township, which he had built in honour of his wife Erwa.

Whatever may be the legends, it can easily be concluded that the town Erwan was named after River Ravi whose ancient name is Iravati and so the Erwan temple of Shiva may also be termed ancient as town itself is. A big fair is held here on Mahashivratri.

Nilkanth Mahadev

Another famous shiva Shrine in Basohli Tehsil of Kathua district is Nilkanth Mahadev. Built by a great ruler of Basohli, Raja Bhupat Pal (1573-1635 A.D.) near his Palace, originally the Lingam of the temple belonged to Kishtwar but later it was brought and installed in Basohli.

It is believed that the "Shivlingam" inside the temple was of sapphire and one could see his previous life by looking into the sapphire lingam. But one day a Maharani of Kishtwar, after looking a picture of female monkey in the sapphire lingam threw it into the fire. Thereafter it turned black but people still have deep faith in the Nilkanth Maharaj and heavy rush of pilgrims is witnessed on mondays and on other pious occassions.

Visvesvara Cave Temple

Visvesvara caves in Basohli on the right bank of river Ravi are among the prominent cave shrines of Jammu. The cave shrine is dedicated to lord Shiva, Mata Annapurna, Hanuman, Nandi and Bhairva besides a 6 foot human figure believed to be of Vishwa Karma, the traditional founder of all crafts.

OTHER SHIVA SHRINE

Ranbireshwara Temple

One of the biggest Shiva temples in the whole of North India is in Jammu City. Near Parade Ground and opposite to Civil Secretariate in Jammu, this Shiv Temple is known after one of the great Dogra rulers, Ranbir Singh.

The foundation stone of this temple was laid in 1882 A.D. and the idols were procured from Jaipur (Rajasthan). The main lingam inside the temple is the biggest in North India. Two pairs of Ekadsha lingams (11 Rudras) one is made of crystal and the other of black stone are the peculiar ones.

Though hundreds of devotees visit the temple daily but on the Mahashivratri day and other pious occassions countless devotees are seen here. A fair is also held on the eve of Maha Shivaratri, every year.

Panchvaktar Temple

The most revered Shiva Temple in Jammu is the Panchvaktar temple and is also the oldest temple of Shiva in the city. The lord is worshipped here in his Swachhanda form in which he is represented as having five heads. But the idol is not five headed and instead are five shiva temples. But as against the huge Shivlingam in Ranbireshwar temple the lingam is very small. This lingam

is believed to be the self appeared (Aapshambu) lingam and people have deep faith in this temple. The temple is situated between the Rajinder Bazar are Vir Marg roads in a lane known as Panchbhaktar street.

Shakti Shrines

Vaishno Devi Shrine

Great Himalayas have been the abode of gods and here once walked gods and sages and in their persuance, centuries later, devotees follow to seek salvation and pay homage at intermittent shrines marked by events of magnitude on their perambulations.

Among these shrines dedicated to various gods and goddesses scattered all over the Himalayan & Sub-Himalayan belt, Mata Vaishno Devi shrine near Katra in Jammu, is the most popular and those who have visited there in faith speak of the returns on their labour, proof and manifestation of the all seeing power that metes out justice to the wanting and the fair.

It is noteworthy that Guru Govind Singh, the tenth Guru of Sikhs came to pay his homage to the goddess in 1672 A.D. He was accompanied by Raja Gajay Singh of Jammu and prayed for his success in battle.

Similarly, Vir Bahadur Banda Bairagi used to come here for prayers and had deep faith in the mother Goddess.

The hundred feet long cave of Mata Vaishno Devi was first discovered by Pandit Shridar, a Brahmin of village Hansali of Katra in Reasi tehsil and he began to look after the cave thereafter. A well accepted belief has it that about seven hundred years ago a Brahmin of Katra dreamed that Mata Vaishno Devi had taken residence on Trikuta hills and in his sleep, he saw three rock statues of Kali, Lakshmi and Saraswati in a cave a top the peak. Not knowing how to interpret his dream, Sridhar started feeding five girls

daily before partaking of his own meals. Soon he noticed that a sixth girl, dressed in red, would join others. A few days later, he asked her who she was and where she came from. In answer the girl asked him to follow her home. Thus began the first holy journey to the shrine of the goddess.

However, it is also believed that "Vaishno", born in South India spent the early years of her life in mediation and was a devotee of Lord Rama. When a demon, "Bhairon" proposed marriage to Mata Vaishno, she fled. Bhairon followed her and in the Himalayan foothills of Trikuta, vaishno took on the form of "Kali" and "waged battle with Bhairon, who was killed with the aid of "Sudershan Chakra", (flying disc) presented to her by Lord Vishnu. As the evil was killed by the divine power in the Trikuta hills so the place became the famous pilgrimage.

According to another belief, when Lord Shiva flew with the burning body of his consort "Sati" (previous birth of Goddess parvati) a part of the burning body dropped at Trikuta hills and so this place became the "Tirtha" like many other places in Himachal on the Sub Himalayan belt.

According to legends Raja Kirtidhar came here for repentence of his sins in 7th century and if so, the shrine is much older than believed. In eleventh century A.D. Raja Jasdev, founder of Jasrota had "darshans" of Mata Vaishno Devi.

The Pedestrain path from Ban Ganga to Bhavan was first built by Raja Kirpal Dev of Bahu in eighteenth century which is still the present route of pilgrimage. Raja Kirpal Dev visited the shrine barefooted.

The outer gate of Mata Vaishno Devi and the temple of Aad-Kumari was built by Raja Ranjit Dev in the same century. Besides, Mian Dido, the great General of Dogra land used to visit this shrine during the pious occassion of Navrates every year and get the path repaired regularly.

He had long association with this shrine and used to pray here before joining the "Lahore" Durbar. He also built the first "Dharamshala" in the Bhavan for the benefit of pilgrims.

Two inscriptions in Sanskrit and Dogri have also been located in the cave. But their period is still unknown.

In ancient times, the pilgrimage was very tough and no any facility was available.

In the beginning of the present century, the route was rebuilt and more Dharamshala's and Sarai's were built for the pilgrims. But state of journey was not very encouraging though millions of devotees thronged the shrine every year.

That was only in 1986, when the former Governor of J&K Mr. Jagmohan constituted Mata Vaishno Devi Shrine Board and took over the entire shrine.

Since then, the entire 13.5 km route has been relaid, widened, made pucca and tiled. Rain shelters have been provided at regular intervals and eating places all along the track under "no profit" scheme introduced by the Board have become the first choice of the pilgrims for refreshment. Besides, sufficient lighting along the entire track has made the night journey totally safe and more pleasant.

Despite all the facilities devotees are sore as they do not have proper and desired "darshana's" of the three "pindies" of Mahakali, Mahasaraswati and Mahalakshmi inspite of the opening of 2nd cave. It is also felt that Sarai's and Dharamshala's are not sufficient to accommodate pilgrims during heavy rush. Now the 3rd cave is under construction and it is hoped that with the opening of this tunnel the devotees will have easy darshana's of the deity for which they come from far and wide from all over the country.

Sukrala Devi Temple

Sukrala Temple is situated just 9 kms from Billawar, the

town famous for its ancient history. The township of Billawar, about 150 km from Jammu by road is situated towards the east of Kathua and west of Baohli town and is approchable by four different routes i.e. one via Mansar Dhar road, second by Dyalachak Dinga Amb road, third by Lakhanpur Basohli road and the last via Manwal Dhar road.

The town is beautifully located on the slopes of wooded Shivalik hills, which has the Naj Hallah flowing at its feet.

The first historical mention of separate Vallapura state (present Billawar) occurs in the Raj Tarangini in the reign of Aant Deva (1028-63 AD) of Kashmir. The earlier name of the town may have been Sumatika, and if so, it find mentioned in a chamba Copper plate as having joined the Drgaras (Dogras) in about 940AD. Vallapura may have been founded earlier but later in 17th Century A.D. the capital of Vallapura state was shifted to Basohli.

9 Km from Billawar is a small village Sukrala, inhabited by about 400 families and located in the side of a pine covered hill. It is situated at a height of 3500 feet (about 1200 mtrs) and commands a good view of the mountains around it and fields spread at its feet. In this village is a temple of Mata Mall Devi commonly known as Sukrala Mata.

Many important local traditions are associated with Sukrala temple which is visited by a large number of devotees. Particularly during navrata days 5,000 people visit the temple daily.

A well accepted view says that about 500 years ago a saint named Trilochan started the sacred learnings in his early age.

When he completed his learnings, his Guru (Teacher) asked him to go back to his native village Sukrala and serve the people of his locality. But Trilochan instead of

returning to home, went to another place, now known as Baramulla in Kashmir region and there he started meditation.

After long meditation mother Goddess asked Trilochan to demand anything from her, as she was highly pleased. Saint Trilochan requested the mother Goddess to appear in his birth place Sukrala to get rid the people of their sins. On his request the mother Goddess promised that she will surely appear in village Sukrala.

After that, Trilochan came back and a few years later during the birth of Trilochan's grandson, the goddess appeared in a dream to his son Shiv Nandan and told him that she is living in the dense Jungle of Sukrala under an "Tamarind" tree in the shape of a "pindi" (stone slab). So Shivanandan with the help of his Colleagues located the "Pindi" of the mother Goddess and the people started worshipping her.

The "Pindi" remained there for sometime and later the temple was built there by a ruler of Chamba State (Himachal Pradesh) named Raja Medh Singh.

It is believed that Medh Singh was brother of a Chamba King who ruled that Dogra State somewhere during 16th century. Medh Singh was expelled by his brother from Chamba and thus he came towards Billawar State.

One day he fell ill seriously and was cured completely from the disease by the blessings of mother Goddess Mall Devi. He was so impressed by the divine power of Mata Mall that when he became the ruler of Chamba after the death of his brother, he sent men and material for the construction of this famous temple. So the construction of the Sukrala temple is atrributed to Raja Medh Singh of Chamba.

Previously, the mother Goddess accepted live goats as offerings but now she accepts sweets and other similar offerings only as animal sacrife stands stopped.

The temple is situated near the small bus stand and is reached by a Flight of about 100 Stairs. There are Sarai's and also a tourist Dak Bunglow for the night stay of pilgrims.

Mahakali Temple at Bahu Fort

An eighth century temple of Mahakali in the Bahu Fort, overlooking River Tawi is the most famous Shakti shrine of Jammu city. Situated on a hill lock inside the Bahu Fort opposite to Jammu City, the temple is built on an elevated platform and houses a black stone image of Mahakali. The temple is a small one and not more than dozen people can be accomated at one time.

The Dogra rulers as well as Jammuites always held it in high esteem and heavy rush of devotees is seen here daily. During Navratras people have to wait for atleast 3 to 4 hours for having "darshana's" of the Mahakali.

Though sweets, Halva (Pudding), puffed rice, floral wreaths and cash etc. are offered to the goddess now, in olden times offerings included animal sacrifice. The animal sacrifice was stopped when a saint who used to meditate in an adjoining temple of Narsimha threw the idol of "Kali" in river Tawi. It is believed that thereafter Mahakali appeared in a dream to Maharaja Partap Singh and told him that wishes of the saint be fulfilled by immediately stopping animal sacrifice. When the Maharaja prohibhited animal sacrifice the saint re-installed the idol in the temple. Now, instead of sacrificing a goat to please the goddess, a goat is purchased for a small sum and after the priest has muttered some incantations, the devotees sprinkled a handful of water on it. When the goat reverts to its own the offering is believed to be accepted by the goddess.

According to ASI (Archaeological Survey of India) sources, the temple sturcture belongs to the 8th century A.D. and even earlier. It is a well established fact that

cherished desires of the people are fulfilled here.

A noteworthy feature of the shrine is the presence of large number of monkeys in its premises. They subsist on sweets, grams etc. offered to them by the pilgrims. The monkeys are very bold and often snatch away from the hands of the unwary. On every Tuesday and Sunday the devotees come here in thousands. Two fairs are held here during Navratras. Though now people come in vehicles, in ancient times devotees used to come here in foot by crossing river Tawi. Now the pilgrims of Vaishno Devi have also started visiting this shrine and its fame has spread far and wide. A Samdhi of Baba Amboo near Bahu Fort is also visited by devotees, particularly the "Khajuria" Brahmins inflock. It is also noteworthy that when Amir Timur invaded Jammu in 14th century A.D. the Fort and temple were present and he has mentioned it in his autobiography, Malfuzat-I-Timuri.

Chichi Mata

A beautiful temple of Chichi Mata on the Jammu-Pathankote National Highway near Samba is a famous Shakti shrine and situated on the right bank of river Basantar (Ancient name Vishwamitra river) near Railway bridge, some 37 km from Jammu.

Chichi Devi is mentioned in Durga Saptshati and the Devi is considered to be a remover of disease. People with various ailments therefore flock to the place. Some Hindu families celebrate here the Mundan ceremonies (first hair cut) of their male children. The temple commands a fine view of samba town accross the Basantar river.

According to legends, Samba town is known after the legendary Raja Sambh (mentioned in Mahabharta epic), a "Yudhvamshi" (A section of the Lord Krishna dynasty), who under a curse by sage Durvasa could not be cured by the medicines. To get rid of leprosy he was advised to bathe

daily in river Basanter (Flowing at the foot of the Chichi Devi temple) and thereafter carry the waters of the stream and pour over the "Shivlingam" in Maheshwar temple in the Samba town. This cured him completely.

According to another legend, Raja Sambh, a ruler of "Dwarka" was counselled by a sage to the jungle where now stands Samba town, bathe in the waters of Vishvamitra river (Basantar) and offer worship in the temples of the Devi and Shiva on opposite sides of the river. The disease ridden king resorted to the place to do so. One day while on his way to the river he was over taken by a terrible storm followed by a heavy downpour in which he was drenched to the skin. When the storm subsided and the rain stopped the king found, to his great astonishment and relief, that his body was completely free from the disease.

That is why a dip in the river Basantar and visit in the Shiva temple and Chichi Mata temple is considered very useful for the ailing devotees.

Though the present building of Chichi Mata shrine is recent construction, originally this place is believed to be very old. Being situated on the National Highway and nearer to the town of Samba and also Jammu, this shrine has gained wider publicity and is regularly visited by a number of people. A spacious "dharmashala" has also been built recently for the devotees wishing to stay.

A big fair takes place here on "Ashtami and Navmi". A Yajna on Ashtami is preceded by a big "Satsang" on saptmi during Navratras.

Kowl Kandoli Temple

Situated in nagrota, 13 Km from Jammu city towards north, Kowl Kandoli temple is among the ancient temples of Jammu. The temple is related with Mata Vaishno Devi and it is believed that Mata's Vaishno started her onwards

journey to Bhawan from this place. According to a popular belief, pilgrims should have Mata first "Darshans" in this temple before proceeding to Bhawan near Katra.

Many new temples have recently been constructed around the main temple. According to the priests of the temple complex, Kowl Kandoli temple was got built by Pandava's but art and architecutre of the temple is similar to that of the temples of Krimchi., Babor, Billawar and Bahu temple and thus we can believe that this temple was also built around 8th or 9th century A.D. It is very difficult to say that who built this temple since no dating has been done by the archaeologists, so far.

This temple has also been taken over by the Mata Vaishno Devi shrine Board constituted in 1986 by the then Governor of J&K, Sh. Jag Mohan. According to a belief all the cherished desires of the devotees are fulfilled with the "darshans" of the goddess. During Navratra's large number of devotees can be seen here and a "Bhandara" (Community feast) is also held here during those days.

Mahamaya Temple

An old temple dedicated to Goddess Mahamaya, situated at a little distance from the fort of Bahu on a Hillock overlooking river Tawi is visible from almost every part of Jammu city and it is believed that once this was part of a prosperous state.

About 15 centuries ago, there existed a prosperous state of "DHARA NAGRI" in Jammu region. Though no specific evidence is available we find many references about its existence by the left side of river Tawi near the ancient fort of Bahu in Jammu.

Almost all historians, scholars and other elder people believe that Dhara Nagri once existed at the site of now called "Mahamaya City Forest area" by the left side of river Tawi. But unfortunately this ancient state was devasted by

unknown natural calamity.

There is no dispute that once a state existed at the place of Mahamaya hillock opposite to the present ruins of Jammu Royal Palace.

Autobiography of Nur-ud-din, the Urdu Persian scholar at the court of Maharaja Ranjit Singh provide more clues about the presence of Dhara Nagri.

He recounted the glories of a vast and beautiful state which once flourished on the hill, right across the river Tawi. According to the details given in the autobiography, Dhara Nagri with the capital of same name was once ruled by a brave and wise ruler named Vikramajeet. Under him, Dhara Nagri prospered and its name and fame spread far and wide. Vikramajeet was succeeded by his son who was not only a weak ruler but also a foolish man of loose character. Worthy people, who had always been ready to sacrifice their lives for the sake of their kingdom during the rule of Vikaramajit started leaving the kingdom as neither their own honour nor that of their wives or sisters was safe. The persons who complained to the rulers rarely returned home alive.

The Chief Minister of Dhara Nagri, who had also served in the times of Raja Vikaramajeet, could not tolerate the injustice any more and once went to the King's court to complaint the king who was in drunken condition at that time and was amusing himself with dance and wine. The King got extremely wild at the Chief Minister and harshly treated him. The Chief Minister categorically pointed out the injustice being done during his time and mentioned that Dhara Nagri which was so famous amongst all the neighbouring states for its spelendour and learning had now earned a bad reputation because of good people leaving the state.

At this, the king got extremely wild and ordered him to immediately leave the kingdom and added that the state

would not get destroyed without him. The Chief Minister replied that it would certainly be destroyed, which enraged the king to the extent that the old Chief Minister was ordered to be killed. His young daughter was brought to the palace of King and his house was set on fire. Soon after the unfortunate incident, misery fell upon the whole of dhara nagri and one midnight whole of the state was destroyed by an earthquake leaving only one focal point i.e. the site of the sacred Mahamaya temple. According to the tradition, the temple of Mahamaya is fairly old and has survived the process of destruction.

According to another tradition regarding this consecrated spot it is believed that Mahamaya bravely fought the invaders and sacrificed herself about 1500 years ago.

Some elderly people say that rare fossils and terracota images were found in large scale from this area but nomads, other people and the floods left nothing. Now only the most sacred Mahamaya temple has been left atop the hillock to tell the story but it was collapsed many times due to cracks and heavy rains. The structure which was collapsed about 5 years ago was simply a small square chamber having approximately height of 3 metres. The roof having an impression of a dome was surmounted by a flag.

In appearance, the temple is not very old. It seems to have been reconstructed or at least has undergone a large scale repairs in the times of Maharaja Ranbir Singh. According to a popular belief, Maharaja Ranbir Singh once fell ill and all efforts of doctors to cure him failed. One day Goddess Mahamaya appeared to him in a dream and told the King that his illness would becured only after he had repaired the temple of the goddess. The goddess is said to have complained to Maharaja, "You have built beautiful Palace for your luxurious living", but look at my deteriorated "Bhavan", cannot even you repair my small Bhavan. The very next day, the representatives of Maharaja with

men and material went to the temple and it was repaired and properly renovated.

As predicted by the goddess in the dream, Maharaja soon recovered from his illness and later during Navarataras, visited this pious temple of Mahamaya alongwith members of royal family. Maharaja's visit to the temple was rejoiced by holding a massive Bhandara (community feast) which was followed by Kanya Poojan (the worship of maidens). Since then the temple is worshipped by a Brahmin family residing in the adjoining village of Bahu.

The people have deep faith in the goddess Mahamaya and it is believed that the mother goddess defend her people against enemies and other miseries. The devotees who visit Mahakali temple at Bahu Fort also pay holy visit to this temple which is in the process of reconstruction.

Sarthal Devi

Of the other Shakti shrines of the mother goddess in Jammu region Sarthal Devi is most popular. This shrine of goddess Sharika at Sarthal near Kishtwar in the Doda District comprises a temple containing one piece black stone statue of the goddess. It is a fine piece of sculpture which has a powerful bewitching effect on the beholder. The image has come from Kashmir over the five and half centuries ago. Sultan Sikandar, popularly known as Sikandar, the iconoclast (1389-1413) was the ruler of Kashmir. He began a campaign to dismantle the Hindu shrines, so the goddess was brought here.

Sharika is Ashotaoka (Ashtadashasha) Bhuja Goddess i.e with eighteen arms. This is the name by which the deity is known in Kishtwar and Bhadarwah. According to a popular legend, Sharika Bhagwati, who resided on the "Hari Parbhat" hill in Srinagar took the form of a small girl and asked a shephered youth to carry her on his back. The boy was prelexed but obeyed the divine command. As soon

as he did so he was wafted into the air till he came to a place known as Aajal on the Sarkot mountain in Kishtwar area. Here he stopped to take some rest. But no sooner had he placed the divine load on the ground then it turned into stone and a spring of crystal clear water gushed out from under it. The shephered immediately informed the people about the goddess and thereafter large number of devotees worshipped the goddess.

A fair is held here every year and countless devotees visit the shrine. However, unlike in other Shakti shrines of Jammu, animal (goat) sacrifice is still in practice in this shrine.

Bala Sundri

Another Shakti Shrine, a temple of Mata Bala Sundri in village Sundri Kot is very famous. To visit the temple one has to undertake the journey on foot from village Bhaddu (Billawar area of district Kathua) and the 10 km trek begins near the bridge on "Bhini" river and then rock. Another shrine of Bala Sundri is in Nagri Parol, near Kathua.

Jourian Devi

The mother goddess appears in the form Jourian Devi some five km from village Banjan in Basohli Tehsil. Annual fair is held here every year on "Vijay Dashmi" (Dussehra).

Pingla Devi

Pingla Devi shrine is fastly gaining popularity and this shrine is about 22 km from Ramnagar in Udhampur district. The goddess appears in the shape of a "Pindi" in a cave and people in large number visit the shrine on special days besides an annual pilgrimage is held every year around July-August.

Chontrha Devi

With the name "Chontrha Devi" the goddess appears in a shrine in village Raag in Ramnagar Tehsil and is about 10 km from the Tehsil Headquarters. The 7 km trek from village Thial & upto the shrine in the forests is beautiful and interesting.

Chond Mata

A pilgrimage known as Machail Yatra in the lesser known area of Paddar is famous in Doda district. Recently people from otherparts of State have also started visiting this shrine of "Chond mata" in Paddar. About 67 km distance from Kishtwar is covered on foot and the area remains snowbound for the most part of the year. However, Yatra for "Chond Mata" is held around June-July and this season is the best for visiting Paddar. The age old tradition of animal sacrifice to please the goddess is still prevalent here.

Kund Mata

Another Shakti Shrine, Kund Mata in tehsil Kishtwar is also visited by the pilgrims in large number and the goddess is believed to be present in a water spring.

Rahushir Devi

"Rahushir Devi" shrine, also in Kishtwar tehsil is situated on a hill top, about 8 km from village Chinta in Kishtwar and is also known as Ashtadasha Devi.

Devi Pindi

About 6 km from village Painthal near Katra (Vaishno Devi) a shrine of "Devi Pindi" is also popular and is visited by locals and others. This is also the place of origin of river Jhajjar.

A shrine of mother goddess in Shoya Patta near Akhnoor town is no doubtly very old. Nearly ruined, the old structure of the shrine has inscriptions in a language which has not been read by the people so far. However archaeologists have never visited the shrine and thus, it is difficult to under stand the script of the inscription. This shrine is also nearer to Katra Vaishno Devi and people in ancient times used this route to visit Katra.

Other Shakti Shrines

Kalika Temple of Poonch

A famous stone temple of Kalika (Mahakali) in the strategic border town of Poonch is about 18 metre high. The temple was built by Raja Moti Singh andhouses a black marble image of Kalika brought from Jodhpur, Rajasthan.

The people of Poonch have deep faith in the Kalika temple and believe that Kalika saved them during ware of 1947, 1965 and 1971 when Pakistanis aimed their guns on the town.

Chamunda Devi

A beautiful temple of Chamunda Devi is situated in Basohli town and Devi appears here in the form of a piece of natural rock.

Ashtadashabhuja Devi

A wooden temple of Ashtadashabhuja Devi (Eighteen arms) in Bhaderwah is beautifully located behind the Dak Bunglow and the sacred image is extremely beautiful.

Bhadrakali

A Bhadrakali temple in Bhaderwah is believed to be among the ancient temples of India and the town has got

its name after Bhadrakali (for more details please see article of Vasuki naga in chapter Naga shrines)

Among other Shakti shrines, Sheetal Mata near nagrota Jammu, the Manma Devi temple in a cave near Kalakote, Mansa Devi temple in Ramnagar town, Sati temple also in Ramnagar, Durga temple in Rajouri and Mahalakshmi Mandir at Pacca Danga Jammu are most famous and believed to be important "Shakti Peeths".

We can thus easily conclude that Shakti worship in various forms of goddess is prevalent in Jammu region since ancient times as is evident by the presence of hundreds of ancient Shakti shrines scattered all over the region.

VISHNU SHRINES

Sun Worship in Jammu

In Hindu astronomy as well as astrology, the Sun, Moon and five planets namely Mercury, Venus, Mars, Jupiter and Saturn are worshipped along with Rahu and Ketu. All these are worshipped as nava-grahas or nine grahas. The images of all these are generally found in all temples of the Hindu pantheon. The worship of Sun God is said to be of Persian origin and the names of some of the Adityas according to Indian Arayans are the same as those according to Iranian Arayans.

Surya (Sun) enjoyed the highest reverence, though with different appellation in all the ancient civilizations, for example, as Atu in Sumerian, Soamasa in Semites, Eman ray in Egytion and Surya Savitri or Pushan in Indian Civilization. Surya was also considered in the form of Adityas and as the chief of the nine-grahas. Even in pre-Historic period when man started to live in groups, there is evidence to show the prevalance of Sun worship. Sun and the various deities associated with the Solar

power for worship were worshipped by the Arayans from early times. The worship of Sun god and its various aspects continued in the later vedic period.

From the early Centuries of Christan era an independent sun-cult appears to have developed in Northern India. In Jammu region we find temples dedicated to the God Surya as well as idols of Surya placed in various temples. The earliest depiction of Surya in this region can be found at Babor, where all the Nine grahas are found carved in a frieze on a monolethic beam of the Mandap of the Shivdiwala temple in the Babore temple complex.

One of the five temples in the Raghunath temple, Panjtirthi is a Surya temple which is enshrined with the image of Surya seated on a chariot drawn by white horses. The image holds a rosary and water pot in the lower hand and lotus in the upper two hands. An icon of Surya is placed in a small niche in the first circumambulation of the Raghunath temple complex Jammu. The four armed image of Surya is seated on a chariot holding Lotus in the upper two hands and the lower two are resting on the knee. The image in raddish brown colour wears a multi coloured garland of flowers. The icon seems to follow the iconographical features as mentioned in the Matsya Purana. Like most of the region Surya is also shown as wearing Mustaches which may indicate regional influence. Surya is worshipped in twelve different forms each of which is said to preside over a month of the year, out of these twelve, four are indicated in the Raghunath temple complex.

Another Surya image in human form with mustaches seated on a chariot drawn by red colour horses is placed in the Lakshmi Narayan temple of Panjtirthi. Apart from the images enshrined in the temples, the worship of Surya was also prevalent in this region from the past. There are good indications to believe that Sun God was worshipped

by the people of this region before the performance of every auspicious function or "Hawana" etc. This type of Surya worship is still much in Vogue in the society of this region. This religious segnificance can also be attested by the people who daily in the morning use to pay Namaskar to the Surya by pouring a little water towards the proper direction of the Sun. It is believed that worship and pouring water gives the peace and prosperity.

The study of some of the temples of Jammu reveals the wide spread prevalance of Sun worship in Jammu during the rule of Dogra rulers. They patronised the worship of Sun God with Lord Vishnu. Many important papers and revenue stamps of the period bears the picture of Sun. Such type of pictures are still visible in the royal building. The Sun icon is also made on the main door of the Raghunath temple complex Jammu. The Sun was the religious symbol of the Dogra rulers. It was perhaps because of their origion from the sun God and known as Suryavanshi.

As the Sun worship is very old in India and its persistence in historic times clearly shows that the ancient traditions relating to sun were later on incorporated by the Hindus in their religious system. Whereas, the ruler as well as the subject of this region also contributed and still the Hindus of this region have a lot of faith in the Sun worship.

Raghunath Temple

Raghunath temple of Jammu, situated in the heart of the walled city is one of the greatest temples of North India because it is not just one temple. It is a unique temple complex comprising as many as eighteen temples. Named after the main shrine of Shri Raghunath Ji, the foundation stone of this complex was laid by Maharaja Gulab Singh in 1851 A.D. Later, the temple was inagurated by his son and successor, Maharaja Ranbir Singh in 1857 A.D.

The main temple is enclosed within an enclosure. Six big halls on the sides contain innumerable "Shaligrams" procured from the bed of Narmada river. The enclosure contains on the outside a number of temples in which are various incarnations of Vishnu besides Shiva and Ganesha. The different Vishnu images includes those Matasya, Narsimha, Varah, Kurma, Radha Krishna, Virat Roopa (Lord in his cosmic aspect) and Vamna etc. It is believed that all the 33 crore devtas have been accommodated in one complex. But the absence of the idol of Bhagwan Parshuram is not understandable. It is also very strange while the dome of the Samdhi of Maharaja Gulab Singh is gold plated, the main temple of Lord Rama and others are very simple having no gold plates.

Thousands of pilgrims visit the temple complex daily. Two Dharamshala's inside the complex are available for the pilgrims coming from outside the city. Being one of the main attractions of Jammu, the pilgrims visiting Mata Vaishno Devi never forget to pay their holy visit to this shrine.

Purani Mandi Temple

A big temple of Ram & Sita is situated in the Purani Mandi locality of Jammu city. This temple as also large number of other temples in the city, was built in the reign of Maharaja Ranbir Singh who was renowned as apatron of art and learning and was almost obsessively given to building of magnificent temples in the various parts of his state, most of all in his capital city of Jammu. The Purani Mandi temple was got built by one of the Maharani's of Maharaja Ranbir Singh known for her spiritual proclivities.

Quite big halls construcred around the main shrine are flush with colorful frescoes marked by frenzied activity as they depict the personae dramatis in diverse phases of the hectic lives. A large hall now occupied by the Mahant of

the temple is full of the wall paintings showing Ramkatha right from the time when "Devtas" approach Vishnu to free them of the doings of the Demons.

Dewan Mandir

Many of the temples of Jammu are controlled by "Dharamarth Trust" whose sole trustee is Dr. Karan Singh. But there are number of other temples which are looked after by other trusts or privately by some families.

The trusts, committees or familites who control different temples are responsible for their repairs, maintenance and beautification. Except few, all are doing their jobs perfectly and have added more to the beauty and sanctity of the temples and shrines of Jammu.

But there are some temples and shrines which have always been ignored and are fastly deteriorating and the time is not far when they will be totally ruined if not attended properly.

One among such temples is the Famous "Dewan Mandir" situated in the middle of the city on Kachi-Chawni Moti Bazar lane. It has Jain school in its rear and Moti Bazar in the east.

The historical aspect of the temple is very interesting and only few among us know this. The temple was built in about 1897 during the reign of Maharaja Raja Partap Singh by his Dewan, Badri nath. There are conflicting versions regarding the reason behind construction of the temple. Some persons told me that Dewan Badrinath built this temple to fulfill the wishes of her mother who had asked her son to build a temple of "Laxmi Narayan". But some elderly people argue that he built the temple in memory of his uncles Dewan Anant Ram and Dewan Jwala Sahay. The Samadhis of his uncles Dewan Anant Ram and Dewan Jwala Sahay in the vicinity of the temple indicate that the temple was built in their memory. Pt. Padam Nath,

priest in the temple and Mr. Sri Chand, a resident in the quarter of the temple confirmed that it was built in the memory of Anant ram and Jwala Sahay.

When Dewan Badrinath decided to construct a temple he could not find any suitable place. Ultimately, he selected a place where "Harijans" of the city were living in a colony. He went there and requested them to vacate the place against handsome compensation. But leaders of the colony not agreed. He requested them time and again but yielded no favourable results.

When he was coming out of the colony it is said that some youths contacted him and told him that this was not the proper way to get the land vacated for the construction of temple. They promised the Dewan, that if they are suitably rewarded, the land will be got vacated immediately. Dewan agreed and after some days the colony was in fire.

As fire destroyed Harijan colony, the land was automatically vacated and Harijans of the Basti or Colony were shifted to other areas.

Thereafter this temple was constructed and beautiful marble statues of Lord Vishnu and Lakshmi were installed in it. A Sarai, Goshala and a Pathshala were also built besides a huge Garden of flowers meant for offerings to Lord Vishnu and Lakshmi.

Later, the management of the temple was given to the Pujari of the temple who was responsible for its repair, maintenance and beautification. After the death of Pujari his two sons took charge of the temple namely Lal Chand and Trilok Chand and later their sons Vijay Kumar and Raj Kumar and Bansi Lal and Sat Pall respectively were heirs of this property.

Interestingly, a Patta issued to a Saint in Persian also reads that Pathshala, Goshala, Sarai and Garden are also

the part of the temple and management will be responsible for their maintenance.

But unfortunately, the Garden was leased to a saw mill, the Goshala, Sarai and Pathshala were closed and the temple is fastly deteriorathing.

The people of the area are agitated over the leniency of the owners regarding maintancence and repairs of the historic temple and above all they complaint that one of the owners have opened a "Saloon" in front of the temple andhence they are not eligible for its ownership even if it is legal.

The people of the city hope that this famous temple will be taken over by Dharamarth Trust or some other similar trust and the Dewan Mandir will regain its faith, glory and importance.

Dhooda Dhari Temple

About 100 feet high temple of Laxami Narayana is also among the famous temples of Jammu. Situated in shastri Nagar colony about 7 km from Jammu city, the temple was got built by Brahmrishi Dhooda dhari and besides Laxami Narayan, small temples of Lord Hanuman and Lord Shiva have also been added. This temple was built in the early eightees.

OTHER VISHNU TEMPLES

There are a number of other Ragunath temples in Jammu but the first such temple, known as Ragunath temple was built by Maharaja Gulab Singh in Sui-simbli, about 18 km from Jammu. Other Ragunath temples are the Panjtirthi temple near old Secretariate Jammu, Ragunath temples at Kishtwar, Ramban, Poonch, Sumah near Akhnoor and Rani temple below gumat etc. All these temples were built by the Dogra rulers.

Ancient temples with Lakshmi Naryan image of Vishnu are few in Jammu and they include the Barshala temple near Thathri in Doda districts built by general Zorawar Singh, Lakshmi Narayan Temple at Bhaderwah, Uttarbehni and Poonch. A new temple of Lakshmi Narayan in Gandhi Nagar is also a famous temple.

Gadadhar temple near the old secretatiate (old Royal Palace) near Jammu was built the Maharaja Gulab Singh soon after he became the ruler of Jammu.

Among the famous Narsimha image of lord Vishnu, Narsimha temple of Ghagwal, Mansar, Uttarbehni (For more details please see chapter sacred rivers, utterbehni) and Kough near Mandli on Dhar Udhampur road are notables while Jagan nath temple at Samba is among the rare temples with the Jagan Nath images. Worship of Monkey God Hunuman is prevalent in Jammu since ancient times and number of Hunman temples are scattered all over Jammu region. While image of Hanuman is always present in all Ragunath temples some exlusive and famous temples of Mahavira are at Purani Mandi, Moti Bazar in Jammu. Besides, Hanuman temples or images have been put up on many roads and routes as Hanuman is believed to confer boons and ensure safe travel. Among the famous Krishna temples of Jammu, two Radha Krishna temples in Rani Talab are prominent.

NAGA SHRINES

Naga Worship

The naga or serpent is an important powerful symbol in the iconography of both "Shiva" and "Vishnu" and images of Shiva prominently display a serpent around his neck symbolising his cosmic energy while Vishnu is often depicted reclining on the endless coils of the serpent Ananta, upon whom the world is believed to rest. "Krishna", a

human incarnate of Vishnu is sheltered by the Multiple hoods of the snake-demon-Kaliya Nag.

It is considered a sin to kill these reptiles and particularly the Cobra or "Nag". Moreover, certain families hesitate even to think of damaging the snakes.

It had been noticed from several Hindu traditions that they started propitiating those from whom they had a fear and had no control over them. For example, the man had no control over fire, floods or wind and so, our ancestors considered them as dieties namely Agni Devta, Jal Devta, Vau Devta etc. and worshipped them believing that they would not be harmed by these if they are appeased. Many people were also killed by snake bite and so it may be the reason that they also worshipped snakes.

Nag Panchmi Celebrations

Snake or Naga worship has been prevalent since time immemorial and a particular day known as Nag panchmi is celebrated in almost all parts of India. It is believed that on this day, which is observed on the fifth day of Shravana (mid July to mid August) Lord Shiva call back the snakes from the earth as they are left with on Mahashivratri where as in other parts Nag Panchmi is dedicated to the great serpent "Shesha Naga" on whom Vishnu reclines during intervals between the dissolution and creation of universe.

On this day, vessels containing milk are placed near the burrows of snakes and termite mounds which are believed to house cobras. Milk is offered to the snakes brought by snake charmers. Figures of Nag alongwith scorpions etc. drawn in Sandalwood paste or turmeric powder on the walls of Kitchen are worshipped. Several special dishes are offered to these figures.

In some families the tradition is that the kitchen is white washed in the night before the Nag panchmi day and until morning no one is allowed to enter the kitchen unbathed

or with dirty clothes. Only after the worshipping formalities are completed in the morning other members of family are allowed to enter the kitchen.

On this day farmers avoid ploughing their fields. Legend has it that a farmer while ploughing his fields accidently damaged the abode of a family of nagas and the young serpent were crushed to death. The mother serpent on her return found that her progeny had been destroyed. She went out in desperate search and found the ploughshare smeared with blood in the house of the farmer who had unknowingly caused the misery. In revenge she bit all the members of the family saved a married daughter. When she went in search of married daughter she found her worshipping "Shesha", the king of serpents.

The vengeful "Nagin" while waiting for the farmer's daughter to open her eyes after mediation, drank the milk kept as an offering.

This appeased the nagin and she confessed that she had killed all the family members and had come to kill her too. In frightful disposition the daughter prayed to "Shesha" to restore her family to life. The nagin thereupon brought Nectar (Amrit) and gave it to the daughter who put a drop on the lips of the dead members of her family who were restored to life. This incident occured on the fifth day of Shravana and since then Nagas have been worshipped.

The Naga motif symbolises that life is moving towards perfection and male energy.

In the family of author "Naga" is believed to have took birth and is considered ancestor as well as Tutelary diety (Kul Devata).

Naga's and the Jammu region

Like other parts of the country Nagas are deeply associated with the traditions, culture and customs of

Jammu region. Nagas are not only worshipped as diety but they once had also their rule on this part of the country.

Vasuki Nag is worshipped in the Doda district while Shesh Naga is worshipped in the Mansar lake and several families visit the lake on certain occasions. Many families in particular, celebrate the mundan ceremonies in the temple of Shesh Nag at Mansar.

It is believed that Nagas once had their rule in Kashmir and many references occur in the history of Kashmir regarding the naga rule. Later, they were defeated by some other rulers who compelled the Nagas to take shelter in the hills of Doda district.

Besides, many references occur in the history that Naga's also ruled many other parts of the country and their territories were spread from Kashmir to Nagaland including Orissa state also. One historical evidence includes that one Naga King "Vibhunaga" of present Orissa state defeated the rulers of the Jammu hills and to commemorate his wisdom fixed a trident (Trishul) at a place, Sudh Mahadev with an inscription on the trident in Brahmi script. The trident belongs to 2nd century AD when Brahmi script was in use. However, a legend relates the trident with Lord Shiva & Parvati.

Later, it is believed that the Nagas of these hills were again defeated by other tribes and as a result they went towards north eastern side and had their new kingdom named Nagaland, meaning the land of the Nagas. This way, nagaland must be linked with Jammu and Himachal hills. But those links are missing and a research is needed to find those missing links. However, it is clear that Nagas, Pishachas and Khas etc. once inhabited the Jammu region.

It is difficult to conclude whether there is any link between the snake worship and the Naga kings but it is interesting that seldom has any culture been so deeply and consistently associated with animals reptiles and trees as

the Indian culture.

Religious belief, mythology and folklore blend to invest it with a sanctity that has reiterated throughout history and endures even today.

Kailash Yatra in the abode of Vasuki Naga

Though in other parts of the country only Nag Panchmi is celebrated to appease the serpents, in Jammu region this happens a fortnight after the Sharavana Purnima (Rakshabanda day), besides the nag Panchmi.

On this day, devotees visit Kaplesh lake, situated at 14,400 ft. on Kailash in Bhaderwah, 202 Km from Jammu. This day is known as "KAILASH YATRA". It is believed that the frozen Kaplesh Lake is the abode of King Vasuki Nag and according to the belief, King Vasuki comes out of the lake for devotees, on this day.

The main pilgrimage (Yatra) proceeds towards Kailash from the main Vasuki nag temple of Bhaderwah amidst chanting of holy hymns.Whole of the 20 Km journey on foot or by ponies, is the most fancianating and charming. One enjoys the scenic splendour in the thick forests of Deodar, Bhojpatra (Birch) trees besides lakhs of other plant species. The high altitude mountains with resplendent snowy peaks all around are the most enchanting. During the course of journey pilgrims cross many points without stopping even for a while, as some herbs and plants on that spots cause uneasy suffocation and every year many people fell unconscious due to the affect of certain gases emitted by these herbs and plants.

On the way, people stop for night haltage and fire is kept alive for whole of the night around the tents to escape from the freezing temperatures even in the month of July-August. Generally, people do not sleep on that night because of deficiency of Oxygen on these high altitudes.

In the early morning, pilgrims in thousands further proceed for the lake which is nearer to that place. After reaching at the "Kaplesh lake" and taking a dip in the Ice cold water, sometimes after breaking the layer of snow on the water surface, devotees go around the lake bare-footed.

Somepeople claim to have seen a huge serpent in the lake which is none other then "Vasuki". According to legends, Nagraja King Vasuki once took shelter in this lake when "Garuda" chased him from Kashmir to kill the former, due to the natural enemity between the both.

To escape from the eyes of "Garuda" Vasuki went deep inside the lake but the former knew his hide out and being unable to enter the lake, started delebating the water of the lake to make it empty. When the water level of the lake started to descend, Vasuki worshipped Lord Shiva and his consort Parvati and prayed for the rescue of his life at the hands of Garuda. It is said that the God pleased with the prayers and the water level started rising as water from another lake at an higher altitude started pouring into the Kaplesh lake. In the meantime, a saint named "Jimut Vahan" also succeeded in persuading the Garuda not to kill his own step brother. So the Garuda left the place.

Later, as the legend further goes on, Goddess Bhadra Kali, after whose name the Bhaderwah is named, favoured for the coronation of Vasuki as the King of "Bhaderwakasha", now Bhaderwah. Later, people started worshipping Vasuki.

There are number of other legends but the true story which could throw light on this subject is in ""Vasuki Puran" a part of which is stated to has been destroyed in the post partition disturbances of 1947. Dr. Anant Ram Shastri, a Jammu scholar has done tremendous research on Vasuki Puran and whatever facts are available regarding Vasuki Puran are due to him.

If we go into the history, a number of "Vasuki Nag shrines in the picturesque valley of Bhadarwah reveals

that people of the valley (also known as Chota Kashmir) were worshippers of serpent Gods since ancient times. Around 10th century A.D. Bhadarwah was ruled by King Vasuki, a serpent, who had come from Kashmir and history stands the witness that the first rulers of Kashmir were Nagas. Kalhan, a noted historian and author of Rajtarangini, has also mentioned Naga rule in Kashmir. Why and how Nagas shifted to Bhadarwah, is unanswerable in absence of factual evidences.

The temples dedicated to Nagas, presently popular as Vasuki nag temples are scattered all over the Bhadarwah tehsil. The main temple is situated within the town and has idols of Nagas. Each idol is about six feet tall and is place on an elaborately carved pedestal about two feet high. They look so solid, majestic and mighty, so full of vitality and so life like that one cannot help but gaze long and longingly at them.

A curious thing about these idols is that they are always two on the same platform and two are mysteriously identical that it is impossible for a layman to distinguish one from the other. The only point of distinction one realises after a very close scrutiny, is a difference in height. Worshippers can go only upto the out sanctury and the narrow passage (Cave) beyond that is said to be connected by a secret passage to the Kashmir valley. The cave is also deidcated to Lord Shiva and has an impressive lingam inside.

Besides, many traditions of the valley are also related with Bhadara Kali, a form of Parvati and the ancient temple of Bhadarwah is also dedicated to Bhadrakali. In the "Rajtarangini", Kali temple of Bhadarwah has also been mentioned as the oldest, by "Kalhan". So, Bhadrakali and Vasuki are both worshipped by people since he ancient times, in Bhadarwah- the ancient Bhadarwakasha.

Sumah Temples

Naga propitiating, an integral part of the Hindu religion has deep influcence in the history of Jammu & Kashmir. Nagas are believed to be the first rulers of Kashmir and later, after the advent of Aryans they were forced to leave the valley for ever. Then they first made the hills of Jammu region their abode and spread all along the Himalayas upto Burma. However, their influcence on religion and culture of J&K remained intact and still legends related to them are narrated. Besides, many shrines in Jammu regions are also dedicated to them.

But there are some shrines which could not gain due popularity for many reasons. One among the reasons may be the fact that they are situated in very remote and nearly inaccessible areas. Even though some are accessible but historians and researchers always avoided to visit those places. Few of such shrines are Kai Devta in Meri Mandrian (Akhnoor), Akhar Devta near Kali Dhar, Shardair Devta, Khungan Devta, Tanda Devta on Poonch road etc.

Another Naga shrine, though in remote border area but easily accessible is Sumah Devta, temple of which is traditionally very old.

Sumah is about 11 Km from the border town of Akhnoor on Akhnoor- Sungal road and nearly 37 km towards west of Jammu. No doubt, the condition of the road owned by State PWD is very miserable like other many roads but buses and matadoors ply regularly from Akhnnor, the last terminal on this road itself is Sumah. In fact, Sumah is not the only village but a cluster of villages around and one has to go on foot and that too bare footed at many places as without crossing the always running water it is not possible to reach many villages. During Monsoon, these villages remain cut off but no problem, as people are habitual and are prepared to bear this even after so many years of Independence.

Any how, Sumah, surrounded by lush green forests and picturesque hills is related with the ancient history. According to the local belief, serpent king Vasuki who ruled over Kashmir valley and later Bhaderwah had 22 sons. When he desired to relinquish his post in favour of his brilliant and deserving son, he asked the sons to bring a water stream in Jammu as this area has been waterless (Kandi) since ancient times. He offered that whosoever among his sons will first bring the water stream will be sworn in the king of Jammu hills.

So all of his sons immediately ran towards hills in the north in search of a source with enough water for supply in the shape of a stream.

An Bhair was eldest and more intelligent, he brought famous river Tawi to Jammu from Bhaderwah area. His brother Kai Devta brought Chandra Bhaga (Chenab) while, Akhar, Khungan, Shardair Devtas etc. also brought some other streams. Sumah, one of the brothers could not find a suitable water source so he brought underground water to the surface and when he was bringing that water to Jammu he and his brothers learnt that their elder brother Bhair Devta, had already been announced the winner as he had brought Tawi through Jammu. Being unable to prove themselves brilliant all other brothers could not to dare to face his father and so disappeared at the places where they learnt the news of his brother's success in the competition. (temple of all those still stands at that very spots). As they all were gifted with divine powers being sons of serpent king Vasuki, they were treated as Devtas by the people. At the spot where Sumah Devta disappeared stands his cave temple and a small Bauli (Bouli). The stream which he brought is still there but it is astonishing as water suddenly appears in the nallash about one Km upstream of the temle and strangely dispappears after just half a km downstream of the temple. While the 200 metre

wide and many km long nallah is totally dry in most of its length, in the central part, about one and half km portion has knee deep, crystal clear water with small fish breed. These fish are considered as the holy deity and no one even dares to think of fishing in this nallah.

It is a well established belief that whenever some one tried to harm these fish, white snakes suddenly appeared in large number. But according to elderly people these snakes seldom harm anyone and so people worship them as Sumah Devta. Though this area is called Sumah after Sumah Devta its actual name is Sungal. The building of the cave temple now isolated and nearly deserted, is more than 150 years old and the inner portion of the cave stand closed. The idols have been shifted in a newly built temple nearby (some elderly people believe that during post partition disturbances most of the original idols were got destroyed and the area also remained deserted for some-time). Another temple, overlooking the stream and the cave temple was built during the reign of Maharaja Ranbir Singh (1857-1885 A.D) is opposite to the cave temple across the stream.

Though, deserted now, the cave temple has high value as more than hundred years ago villagers sudeenly spotted a saint, baba Bharat Dass inside the cave. The Baba had divine powers and according to the people he once made alive a dead cow of a villager whose milk was served to him.

Later, another saint occupied the cave and built a beautiful ashram opposite to it. After his death, his disciple occupied the seat who is still holding charge of the Ashram. In the lap of nature and lacking rooms and any other sort of facilities the Ashram is the place where one's mind is gifted with peace and deeper thoughts.

An annual fair, held every year on the eve of Chaitra Chaudish is attended by thousands of people and on this pious occassion, a dip in the Sumah nallah is considered

very useful.

Tsuhar Nag

Tushar Nag near Margan Pass is 11600 feet above sea level in between Kishtwar and Anant Nag. On the Margon on east side it is preceded by three oblong lakelets, the first two of which are called "the "watul" or scavenger, and third is called the "Dob", or washerman". On its west side is another rectangular spring, which goes by the bame of Moji: mother. Tushar nag is more than one kilometer in circumfrence and commands a splended view of the Nobug nai, the Pargana of Kutahar and the Liddar, with external snows of the far off Pir Panjal in the background. The other three sides are encircled by rugged grassless peaks, whose white and grey slopes form a strong contrast to the deep sky-blue waters of the lake, and where clouds play a never ending game of hid and seek. Its grassy western banks is literally carpeted with white and blue harater, Kastur, bindar, tekabatan, achhi-pose and numerous varities of mountain flowers. This wonderful combination of the different aspects of mountains scenery-the bleak white cliffs the blue translucent sky in which huge masses of clouds are seen trailing without intermission, the equally blue translucent lake, the green velverty wastern banks thickly covered with white, blue, vermillion, purple and bright yellow flowers, the extensive and dangerous expanse of boulders and stone debris which the partial melting perennial snows and the rolling avalanches have brought down makes the Tsuhar Nag one of the most charming spots in the area.

It would have been surprising, therefore, if the nature loving Hindus had not clothed it with myth and legend, the more so, as the people of the region have always attached great sanctity to these Nagas. Tsuhar Nag may be considered, to be the guardian angel of Kutahar, though

apparently not even a single drop of its water ever reaches Kutahar. The Tsuhar Nag, which, though rising in Kashmir, empties nearly all its water into the Chenab, which irrigates a considerable portion of Jammu region.

Popular legends consider the five springs, which stand side by side as a family group. It is said that the mother of Tsuhar Nag once asked her eldest son to go about in the world and seek a place where both of them might live comfortably.When he returned after a thorough search, he told her that he had been able to secure room for himself but not for her. She was naturally incensed at his unfilial behavior and cursed him saying, "go and be foundered among the cargs and rocks". A place in the ravine, as one goes up the slope towards Tsuhar Nag where the drainage of the glen above flows invisible, under large mass of white boulders with a great gulgling noice is pointed out at the spot where unnatural son is still expiating for his sins.

She then commissioned her second son Tsuhar Nag to go on the same errand. He returned with the report that there was plenty of room for her, but none for him. The mother was pleased at the loyality of her son and blessed him saying, "go and live to reign prosperously". She gave him the prominent place among the Nagas of the surrounding country and ensconced herself in the quite little nook by his side (the Mojis spring). For his greater convenience she gave him many artisans-the sweeper, the shoe maker, the washerman, the potter etc. who satisfied andstill satisfy multiple requirements. Of these, the watul alone who combined in himself the double office of the sweeper and the shoemaker has a separate habitation probably because he was considered untouchable, being a "Candala" while all the rest are huddled together in a single tarn, the washerman though at times the potters vessels are said to be visible to the eye of the faithful.

The Tsuhar Nag plays an important role in the

agricultural life of Kutahar. This Pargans is for the most part dependent for its crops upon the timely rainfall. Whenever rain fall appear in time, the peasants of Kutahar, Hindu and Muslims alike, raise a subscription and send the Brahman priests of Krur to the lake where they perform a sacrifice. The chief feature of the ceremony is the catching of one of the Newts, which are found inlarge shoals in the shallow waters near edges of the lake.

When it is caught, it is put in vessal filled with the water of the lake and before starting of their return journey the priests cry out, "Lord Tsuhar naga, we have carried a hostage to ensure the fulfillment of the agreement which is of course a good rainfall". Then they go away. It is said that this ceremony for bringing rainfall never fails. Only sometime the Naga likes an astute lawyer who merely fulfills the letter of the agreement by causing rainfalls in the mountains alone and thus leaving the devotees in exactly the same tight hole that they were in before the sacrifice. But if the Naga is clever, the Brahmans are cleverer still, when they catch him playing such tricks, they inflict terrible disgrace upon him by placing the "hostage" away as a surety for his good conduct in the custody of a scavenger, who is considered lowest among the low born in an Indian community. Even the puissant Naga has no remedy against this chastisement. He has absolutely no choice but to supply some rain at least in Kutahar after which the hostage must be taken out of his humiliating abode and carried to the village of Khul Tsuhar and dropped in the spring there. It is believed that the Khul Tsuhar spring is another abode of the Naga perhaps for the winter. The Brahmans must, however, take specially good care of the hostage during the period of his captivity. Should he die, the person in whose charge he is kept is believed to lose a member of his family during that very year.

Bhair Devta

As already referred, serpent king Vasuki had 22 sons and once when he fell seriously ill, was advised to take a purificatory bath in the water brought down from Himalayas. This was very difficult and a Herculean task to bring a river down from the Himalayas. So he offered to his sons that whosoever will bring the river will be sworn in the king of Jammu hills. Bhair, the eldest son of Vasuki brought river Tawi by removing the rocks and boulders from Kali Kund on Kailash mountain (place of origin of river Tawi) in Bhaderwah.

Thereafter, Bhair was declared the king and later, with the passage of time people started worshipping him at a place near Nagrota on the left bank of river Tawi. The stream here is full of big fish and devotees feed them with small balls of kneaded flour.

Some families treat Baba Bhair as Kul Devta (Tutelary deity) and celebrate the Mundan ceremonies of their sons at this place. Animals are also sacrified and their mutton is offered to the fish also. This shrine having no temple, is the most popular Naga shrine of Jammu.

OTHER NAGA SHRINES

Nagbani, about 12 Km from Jammu on Jammu-Akhnoor road is a famous Naga shrine in Jammu and devotees worship here on the day following Baisakhi and sing and dance to the joy and entertainment of the people.

Surgal Baba shrines in Kathua and Udhampur are notable Naga shrines and people offer prayers in these shrines.

Kharsar devta shrine in Ramnagar tehsil is visited by the people daily as little water (Charnamrita) taken inside the shrine is believed to be effective in undoing the venom of snakes and scorpions.

Besides, some other local Naga shrines in many small

villages are present in Jammu region and people have deep faith in these shrines. But as they are not more than of local importance so they are not being mentioned separately.

SACRED RIVERS, LAKES, SPRINGS AND PONDS

Ponds And Spring Shrines

Among other shrines, ponds and springs contribute more in maintaining secular traditions besides being the sacred place for a particular community. Ponds and springs were the main source of water for drinking, bathing and other purposes before introduction of present system of water supply. Still in many areas ponds and springs play significant role in the lives of people.

During olden days people of all religions and from all communities used to take water from the same pond. But apart from drinking, washing or bathing purposes some ponds served other purposes and were considered sacred due to one reason or another. These sacred ponds are scattered all over the region and mostly are adjacent to some religious places.

A such pond adjacent to Narsimha temple at Ghagwal on Jammu-Pathankot National Highway is considered Sacred by all thecommunities. For centuries, people from far off places are coming to take bath in this sacred pond with the faith that their sins would be mitigated after taking a dip in the pond. A large number of people of all faiths visit the tank on every new moon's day to purify themselves. Before Indepence this pond was visited by people in flock.

Miraculous Spring

A spring is situated adjoining Devi Temple at Phinter on Dhar Udhampur road. A bath in this pond is considered

very efficacious in the removal of rheumatic pains and people and patients come here from even far flung areas. Now in the science age people still believe the effect of a bath in the tank and instead of going to doctors they prefer to come here.

Bawe Ka Talab

A very famous pond considered most sacred is situated on Akhnoor road and called as Bawa Jitto Ka talab (A pond of Bawa Jitto). A bath in this pond is considered meritorious in many ways and people from even other states also pay their holy visit to this place without the distinction of caste and creed. A bath in this pond is considered beneficial for barrens (Issueless couples). A fair is held here every year which continues for several days. It is remindable that Bawa Jitto is linked with Mata Vaishno Devi Ji. (For detail please, see bawa Jitmal article in chapter II).

Date Ka Talab

Date Ka Talab (A pond of Data Ranpat) at Birpur is famous in many ways as it reminds us that truth always prevails and justice is God. Besides other beliefs the water and earth of this pond is considered very effective in skin diseases. May there be some chemicals in the water of the tank but it is proved that by using "Sakkar" (Earth) and "Amrit" (Water) of the pond, the skin diseases are cured.

As we know that water of several ponds, rivers and springs has medicinal value and patients suffering from certain ailments are cured so this may be the reason that people in the past started to believe that these places are sacred and what is more important is the fact that people of all religions shared these beliefs. The sacredness or the religious sanctity of these ponds can also be attested by the fact that people not only worship these ponds but also bring the pious water and earth from the ponds with them

and sprinkle the water in their houses and other places to get rid of the spell diseases as well as difficulties.

It is also notable that all such places having these sacred ponds etc. are associated with some saints or Gurus or persons who sacrificed their lives for the sake of society. They raised their voice against unjustice and belonged to all communities.

Data Ka Talab at Birpur is also famous for curing spell diseases and helping barren to have child. It is also believed that those ladies whose children died just after taking birth if took bath in this pond are blessed with the children having long age.

Mutual Belief

As popular pond/well of Chamlyal Baba near Ramgarh, exactly on the Indo-Pak International Border is the finest and noble example of secular traditions and common brotherhood. This place is the witness that people of both India and Pakistan irrespective of religion or nationality have mutal faith, mutal traditions and deep love for each other.

As tension escalates on the borders and both the armies seem ready for what can be predicted as a war to quench the thirst of the political giants of the two nations that were born of the same stock, spirits of the people onthe either sides of the borders seem to be indifferent if not of fear. If the people specially residing close to the borders are to manifest any feeling it is of mutual brotherhood, unity of traditions, customs, of belief of spirit as seen in the annual celebrations of the fair of Baba Chamlyal.

It is believed that all kinds of skin diseases are cured after taking a dip in the chamlyal and using earth on affected parts of the body.

Another sacred pond at Sidh Soankha near Samba in Jammu District is also mentionable. The place is known

after the saint Jogi Sidh Gauria who lived and died here. A disciple of Guru Gorakh Nath, Sidh Gauria find place in the folklore of region. People believed to be possessing evil spirits are brought here to take bath in the sacred pond. Many legends are associated with Sidh Soankha.

Gupt Ganga

Gupt Ganga is a spring having a mysterious origin. It starts frominside a cave and the temple nestles at the foot of the Ashapati mountain rising to about 3000 metre on the bank of Niru Nallah coming from the Kailash Kund in Bhadewah. According to a belief, this shrine dates back to the time of Pandavas who are believed to have trekked to Kashmir through an undergorund passage from the cave of Gupt Ganga.

Trisandhya

A most peculiar of its kind, Trisandhya is a spring on a small nallah which flows intermittently and for only a short period in the year. This spring shrine is situated in Dachhan area of Kishtwar. However, it is still inacessible for most of the people as it has not been connected with a road. This spring is regarded as a miracle of nature and a bath in its waters is considered very meritorious. Water appears in it thrice. It flows but as soon as it reaches the stream flowing a short distance from lower down, it starts receding and goes back to where it had come from. There is no knowing when the water may start flowing and as it flows for a brief period, people sit on its sides ready to jump in as soon as water appears in the springs.

Paapashi

A "Bouli" named Paapnashi is situated near the Dugra temple at Sudh Mahadev. As appears by its name, sins are believed to wash away with a bathe in this spring.

There are a number of hot springs in the whole of the region and people treat them as religious spots where many diseases are cured by just bathing and so people in large number, irrespective of caste or creed, visit these places.

Among other sacred ponds and springs, Puran Khoo, now in Pakistan, is noteworthy and it was an important sacred pond before partition.

River Devika & Utterbehni

Of the famous pilgrimages of Jammu "Utterbehni" is perhaps the richest in religious wealth. The fame of Utterbehni as a religious centre has spread far and wide through the ages. Situated about 43 kms towards South West of Jammu, Utterbehni is also connected with Purmandal, another sacred place of equal importance by a narrow foot path through the hilly forests while regular bus service is available from Jammu to Utterbehni.

Utterbehni enjoys high reputation as a sacred place as the location of the place is just on a bend of river Devika which flows towards the north and for this reason the place is known as "Utterbehni" meaning flowing towards north. River Devika is compared with river Ganga and is believed to have appeared on Phalguna Chaturdashi (Mahashivratri day) at the end of "Dwapura Yuga".

According to a legend Rishi Kashyap performed meditation for a long time to purify the sinners of this belt of northern India. When lord Shiva pleased with his dedicated devotion appeared before him, the Sage-Rishi Kashyap, requested Lord Shiva to do something for purification of the sinners of this backward area. At this Shiva" asked his consort Uma (Parvati) to flow there in the "land of Dogras" as Devika and ordained that whosoever bathed in this river would be purified. Lord Shiva also manifested himself - as "Lingams" at a number of places on the banks of "Devika". Originating from Gouri Kund-Sudh-Mahadev (Man Talai)

this sacred river flows through Udhampur, purmandal and Utterbehni and people of this area take away the water of Devika for use in their homes at several pious occasions.

Interestingly, performance of "Sharadha's" here is considered equally meritorious as at Gaya or kashi or Ganga and for this reason sometimes Utterbehni is referred as "chhota Kashi". People, living on this belt dont' go to "Haridwar" for immersion of the ashes of the deads in Ganga and instead immerse the ashes in this river which according to Hindu customs should only be immersed in Haridwar, Gaya or Kashi etc. More interestingly, at many places Devika flows beneath the surface and its water seldom appears over the river bed. But the water can be obtained by digging the sandy bed. So at many occasions devotees dig about knee deep pits to take holy dip in the river.

Certainly because of these reasons Utterbehni has gained more importance but sacredness of Devika has also references in ancient Hindu literature including "Purana's".

Padma Purana mentions the sacredness of Devika upto "10 Karows"-about 20 miles. According to Padma Purana, creation of Devika was exclusively for the purification of Dogra land.

Nilmata Purana and Vishnudharmottra referred Devika as an incarnation of mother Goddess Uma, the consort of lord Shiva.

As Devika flows undergorund at many places it is also called Gupt Ganga. Two sanskrit manuscripts namely Devikalehri and Devika mahatamya, presently placed in Ragunath Sanskrit library Jammu also highlights its importance.

Another sacred attraction of Utterbehni is the presence of three temples. The first temple dedicated to Gadhadhar (Lakshmi Narayna) was built by Maharaja Gulab Singh in

1837 A.D. A significant feature of the temple was the residential Sanskrit Vidyalaya which was later added by Maharaja Ranbir Singh making free provisions for the scholars from J&K and elsewhere. It was a famous centre of Sanskrit learning.

The second temple known Abmukteshwar temple was built by Maharaja Ranbir Singh and is enshrined with a huge "Shivlingam" in the centre and Rudra lingams around. The massive lifesize white marble statue of "Nandi" situated in the temple is believed to be the biggest in Northern India.

The third temple is enshrined with Ekadhsha Rudra alongwith images of Rama, Sita and Lakshman indicating the Catholic spirit of the Dogra rulers. Another major attraction of Utterbehni is the presence of ancient fossils which have been found in abdundance in the hilly forests of this area and some of the fossils have been kept in the different institutions of Jammu. Still more can be found if efforts are made.

Utterbehni was the famous hold of the Brahmical order and the importance was much more enhanced during the reigning period of Maharaja Ranbir Singh (1857-1885).

The highest esteem in which Utterbehni is held by the people of Jammu region has given it a unique position in the realm of spiritual attainment and two major fairs are organised every year. Besides, thousands of pilgrims visit this sacred place daily.

OTHER SHRINES

Bawa Jit Mal Samadhi (Bawa Jitto) and Jhiri Fair

Fairs and festivals are the most interesting and glorious part of our culture and play significant role in the life of people. As rural areas lack modern means of entertainment, fairs form the main source of amusement for the people living in rural parts of our country, that is why fairs are held in almost every part of rural India with great enthusiasm on several occasions.

Generally it is assumed that fairs are organised for mere amusement, as wrestling competitions, cattle shows and different entertainment programmes are the main attraction of any fair. But it is not the truth. If we go deep, mostly fairs are organised in the memory of great men and saints of the past, who sacrificed their lives for the cause of justice, equality, truth and humanity. Besides, some fairs indicate seasonal changes and provide ruralites and opportunity to meet their distant relations.

In Jammu region, celebrations of fairs exhibit the glorious traditions and cultural heritage. Fairs of Jammu not only convey the message of love, peace and justice or equality but also contribute more in maintaining secular traditions.

Among other fairs held on Baisakhi, Budh Purnima or Shivratri etc., "Jhiri Fair" is the most fascinating.

Known as "Mela Jhiri" the fair is held on every "Kartika Purnima" which coincides with the birthday of Guru Nanak Dev Ji. People, particularly the farmers from not only the Jammu and kashmir but also from the neighbouring states flock-in here to pay their homage to Bawa Jitto, the peasent martyr who sacrificed his life for the cause of farmers about 550 years ago.

A legend has it that about 600 years ago, a Brahmin named Bawa Jitto used to perform Puja of mata Vaishno

Devi in village "Ghaar" near Katra, the base camp to the holy shrine. Later, Mata Vaishno Devi herself took birth as his daughter thus fulfilling the desire of Bawa Jitto.

After Mata Vaishno Devi became his daughter named "Bua Kouri", Bawa Jitto decided to work as a farmer. Since he had no land with him, he went to Raja Ajaib Dev (1426-1474 AD), the then ruler of Jammu and urged for land at any place and promised to give 50 per cent of his crops to the king to which Raja Ajaib Dev agreed.

As per folklore and legends, besides some historic references, Bawa Jitto was alloted land at village Jhiri about 20 Km from Jammu. But the land was rocky and barren and also lacked irrigation facility of any kind and unworthy to farming.

Despite such odds, Bawa Jitto worked day and night and after a hard labour and efforts of complete one year produced a record quantity of Foodgrains.

When Raja Ajaib Dev noticed this, he demanded 75 percent of the wheat which was not acceptable to Bawa Jitto. Then the king's men tried to get whole of the grains by force. And being unable to pocket the grains, Bawa Jitto ended his life sitting on the heap of the grains.

Whole of the grains were stained by his blood-the blood of a Brahmin. During those days people including kings used to fear too much from Brahm Hatya.

According to popular belief, whosoever including birds and animals consumed that wheat, suffered natural calamities and within days thousands of people died as a consequences of Bawa Jitto's martyrdom. His daughter Bua Kouri too ended her life with her father at the tender age of seven years.

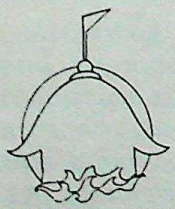
Later, it is believed that people shifted to far off places and many of them changed their castes and religions even, to escape the wrath of miseries, but to of no avail. They

only got the relief when they accepted Bawa Jitto and Bua Kouri as deity. King Ajaib Dev himself built a temple at the site of Jitto's martyrdom and after that a fair was held in his memory. King also announced a number of land reforms as demanded by Jitto.

Since then, this fair, which continues for over a week is held every year and the devotion is now taken to the hereditary, as it is believed that all those who consumed blood stained wheat have to pay obeisance at the Samadhi of Bawa Jitto. During the fair a large number of devotees barring caste and creed including some birds waive their heads on the rhythm of drum which is called "Jaatar".

The fair, which is in fact a fair of justice is immensly popular village folk. The state government on its part provides a number of facilities to the participants (devotees) who come here from far off places to pay their homage to Bawa Jitto. Sugarcane is the main attraction of fair.

3 CHAPTER III



SIKH SHRINES

Sikh Community of Jammu

Both Hindus and Sikh treat Kashmir as a holy place. The founder of Sikhism Guru Nanak Dev Ji had paid visit to the valley and it is said that the Gurdawaras at Matan and Anant nag were founded in connection with his visit in the 16th century. During his visit he convinced many persons to follow his teachings and thoughts. Among those persons was one of the leading kashmiri Pandits-Brahana Dass. It is also on record that Shri Chand, the son of Guru Nanak Dev had also visited the Valley and met with many kashmiri Pandits. In commemoration of the visit of Shri Chand, a "Math" was erected on Residency Road Srinagar and it is known as Shri Chand Chinar Math.

Shri Har Govind (1595-1644), the sixth Guru, also visited Kashmir during the reign of Mughal Emperor Jahangir (1605-25). It is said that he made his residence in Srinagar just outside Akbar's walled city of Nagar Nagar. This place is now known as a Gurudawara Chhati Padshahi Srinagar. During his stay in the valley, he made many followers.

In 1575 A.D. a delegation of Brahamins from Kashmir led by one Kirpa Ram, a Mohyal Brahamin and resident of Mirpur who happened to be at Mattan, met Guru Teg Bahadur in Punjab and pleaded before him to get them rid off from the oppression of the cruel muslim Governor of Kashmir. Guru Teg Bahadur gave a patient hearing to the members of the delegation. After this, Guru Teg Bahadur approached Aurangzeb and asked him to stop his cruel rule over the Hindus of Kashmir. For this boldness of Guru, Mughal Emperor Aurangzeb awarded death punishment to him.

As stated above Shri Guru Nanak Dev came to Kashmir in 16th Century but we do not know whether he visited Jammu on his way to Kashmir. According to Dr. Gopal Singh, Guru Nanak Dev came to Jammu along with.

Mardana on his way back to punjab from Mount Kalash. But he has not quoted any source of this information. Guru Arajan Dev (1563-1606 A.D.) deputed one Madhoj Sodhi to Poonch for the propogation of Sikh Panth. Guru Har Govind (1595-1644 A.D.) on his way to Kashmir also visited Poonch and gave his sermon to the people of Poonch and asked them to follow the teachings of the Sikh Gurus.

Raja Kapur Dev (1530-1571 A.D.) of Jammu was religious minded and used to give high respect to holy men. According to Ganesh Dass Wadehra, Raja Kapur Dev paid visit to Guru Angad (1504-1552 A.D.) in Punjab and got his blessings. He again went to Punjab and had a Darshan of Guru Amar Dass in 974 Hizra erra and remained with him for few days. Due to the felicity of the company and the blessing of the Guru, Raja Kapur Dev begot twenty two sons. When Raja Gaje Singh became the ruler of Jammu in 1672 A.D., he invited Guru Govind Singh to visit Jammu. Guru Govind Singh accepted the invitation of the Dogra ruler. Guru Govind Singh came first at Purmandal, a sacred place in Jammu and from there after a brief stay he came to Chenani where Raja Gaje Singh, his brother Jaswant Singh and others were waiting to receive Guru Govind Singh (1666-1708 A.D.). From Chenani, Guru Govind Singh went to Shri Vaishno Devi to have a Darshan of the sacred shrine. It is said that both Raja Gaje Singh and his brother remained with Guru for seeking his blessings. Guru Govind Singh became happy due to the respect which they showed to the former during his stay in Jammu and Guru gave a Dastar to Gaje Singh and a steel spear to Jaswant Singh. This spear remained in possession of Mian Rattan Singh the son of Jaswant Singh. He kept it, carefully guarded and treated this as a thing of reverence. It shows that the Dogra rulers had great respect for Sikh Gurus.

A Dogra Rajput named Sh. Lachman Dass hailing from

Rajauri had renounced the world and wanted to settle on the bank of river Godawari to lead a life of a secluse. Coincidently he met Guru Govind Singh at Nanded and became his disciple. Guru gave him a new name of Banda, Bairagi. After the death of Guru Govind Singh in 1708, Banda Bairagi came to Punjab and rallied the Sikh youths to fight against the mighty Mughals. He was the first Dogra Sikh who established a Sikh Raj in a part of the Punjab. It seems that Raja Dhruv Dev (1707-1733 A.D.) of Jammu supported Banda Bairagi with men and money in fighting against Mughal forces in the hills of Basohli, and Jasrota and ultimately Mughal Subedars were ousted from these territories. At last when Banda Bairagi was forced to retreat by the Mughal forces, he took refuge in the hills of Reasi where he was given shelter and protection by the Dogra ruler. During this period it seems, Banda Bairagi made many peoples his followers. He took them to Punjab to give fight to the Mughal Governor of Punjab. However, he was defeated and caught along with his minor son. Both father and son were put to death by the order of the Mughal ruler. A small Gudawara known as Dera Baba Banda Bairagi still stands on the bank of river Chenab near Reasi. In this Gurdawara a Shivling also exists which shows, that this place of worship is common to both Hindus and Sikhs.

During the reign of Maharaja Ranjit Dev (1733-82 A.D.) a pious person named Baba Ram Dayal Bedi a resident of Dera Baba Nanak came to Jammu for preaching Sikh faith. He was staunch follower of Guru Govind Singh. By nature, Jammuites are very hospitable to religious persons and always give red carpet to saints, Sadhus and Sufi Faqirs. Baba Ram Dayal Bedi was also given hearty welcome by Jammuites. They gathered, probably in Dharm Shalla of Udasi Sect where the office of Bir Sen Anand and Co. Jammu presently stands, to listen the serman of Baba Ram Dayal Bedi. According to Ganesh Dass Wadehra, the author of Raj darshni, many Hindus of Jammu initiated into Sikh

faith for the first time by Baba Ram Dayal Bedi. However, the foundation of Udasi Sect was laid by Shri Chand, the son of Guru Nanak Dev & was already in existence in Jammu before the arrival of Baba Ram Dayal Bedi.

Poonch remained a centre of religious activities of the Sikhs. Guru Govind Singh after the establishment of Khalsa Panth, deputed sant Bhai Pheru Singh for the propogation of Sikh religion. Bhai Pheru Singh appointed his successor Bhai Punjab Singh who made village Challar Kalas his head quarters. He deputed one Bhai Roocha Singh from his head quarter to Poonch for the progagation of the teachings of the Sikh Gurus. Sant Roocha Singh died at the age of 115 years. Bhai Mela Singh succeeded Roocha Singh. He established a Gurudawara at village Nangali which later-on came to be known as Gurudawara Nagali Sahib, a famous establishment of the sikhs of the Poonch. Much credit goes to this establishment for the propogation of Sikh religion in Poonch.

After the death of Maharaja Ranjit Dev in 1782, the Sikh forces, under Sardar Mahan Singh Sukherchakiya invaded Jammu in 1782 A.D. when a weak and debauch Dogra ruler Brij Raj Dev was on the Gaddi of Jammu and was busy in conducting the death rituals of his father. He fled towards Trikuta Mountain and the Sikh forces occupied the city of Jammu and ransacked it recklessly. According to one estimate Sardar Mahan Singh took away with him the booty of rupees two crores. Raja Brij Dev came back to Jammu after the Sikh forces had left Jammu for Amritsar. But Brij Raj Dev was destined to rule for a few years. He died fighting with Sikh forces near Chaprar (Now in Pakistan) in 1787 A.D. Later on, Jammu came under the control of the Sikhs because of the intrigues of Rani Bandrali, the wife of Raja Jit Singh, the successor of Raja Brij Raj Dev. From 1783 to onwards, Jammu often witnessed the attacks of the Sikhs one after the other and

during these attacks, the people of Jammu and its surrounding areas were forced to flee to the Hills. These attacks of the Sikhs are still known as as 'Sikhen Di Nad' in the Duggar.

In lieu of the good services, rendered by Gulab Singh and his brothers to the Sikh Kingdom, Maharaja Ranjit Singh (1800-1839 A.D.) came to Akhnoor on 4th May 1822 A.D. he conferred upon Gulab Singh the Rajgi of Jammu by applying a saffron mark on his forehead personally.

In 1832 A.D. Maharaja Ranjit Singh paid visit to Purmandal, a religious place in Jammu. He made lavish offerings at Purmandal to the Hindu temples and persons connected with their keep-up. He also took holy bath in the Devika. From Purmandal he came to Jammu when Raja Gulab Singh and his brother Raja Dhian Singh extended to him a rousing welcome. Among other festivities held during his visit, the Dogra chief escorted Maharaja Ranjit Singh, on an elephant through the streets of Jammu and showered the welcoming crowd with thousands of silver coins. It is also said that Raja Gulab Singh touched the feet of Maharaja Ranjit Singh and remained bowing sometime till Maharaja lifted him up with both hands. This action of Raja Gulab Singh was to provide a proof of his loyalty to the ruler of Punjab. At that time, it seems that there was no Gurdawara in Jammu. However, in one of the Dharamshallas in Dhunthili Bazar, Jammu, there was a Panj Granthi where he bowed his head and donated a small amount of money and clothes. Likewise there was no temple in Jammu proper. However, there was a small Thakurdawara in the inner palace of Dogra ruler where Maharaja Ranjit Singh donated rupees five hundred and bowed his head before the Hindu deities. Maharaja Ranjit Singh also visited a Dehra of a Muslim Fakir named Ali Shah and made to him the cash offerings worth rupees five hundred. Raja Gulab Singh also took Maharaja Ranjit Singh to the

beautiful and well laid garden of Mughlani Begum for pleasure. The gave cash reward to the keepers of the garden for keeping the garden neat and clean.

With the establishment of sikh rule in Jammu, it is but natural that some families of the sikh officers, adventurers, Granthis and Akalis might took their residence in Jammu city as well as in rural areas. There is also every possibility that some Hindu families also converted to the Sikh faith to win the favour of the ruling class. Thus there seems to emerged a small community of Sikhs in Jammu.

After the defeat of the Sikhs at the hands of the Britishers in 1846, the state of Jammu and Kashmir was created. Maharaja Gulab Singh also inherited Sikh battalions which were stationed in the valley before 1846. According to Kushwant Singh, Gulab Singh also recruited two battalions of Marsehin Sikh. Maharaja Ranbir Singh who succeeded Maharaja Gulab Singh recruited two hundred Kuka Sikh in his army but they were ousted from the service after receiving a strict warning and protest from the British Govt.

During the early Dogra rule some Khatri families from Punjab had migrated to Jammu for purpose of trade and business, and among these some were Sikh Khatris and they had flourishing business in Jammu.

No doubt, the separate identity to the Sikhs was given by Guru Govind Singh who organised the Sikhs into nation by improving upon their certain rules of conduct and a definite sites of initiatious, but still the Sikhs were considered as a part of Hindu Society. Due to this factor, the Sikhs of Poonch got recorded themselves as Hindus in the census of 1873 and not Sikh.

In 1891, the Singh Sabha was established in Jammu. It began to take interests in the religious affairs of the Sikhs and also took over the management of a Gurudawara situated at Raghunath Bazar. The census of the state

which took place in 1891, recorded the entire population of Sikhs in Jammu and Kashmir as 11,399 Souls where as the total population of the state was 25,43,952. But they had higher percentage of their population in Poonch and Muzaffarbad. I give hereunder the population of the Sikhs for various decades as a whole in the J&K State as well as in Jammu Province:-

Year	Entire State	Jammu Province
1891	11,399	(not available)
1901	31,553	13,113
1911	-	(not available)
1921	39,507	21,627
1931	50,662	29,282
1941	65,903	38,566
1951	(Census were not conducted in the state)	
1961	63,069	46,273
1971	1,05,873	76,262
1981	1,33,675	1,04,027

In 1891, there were 45 Sikhs for every 10,000 sikhs in Jammu province but in 1931, they increased to 138 for every 10,000 sikhs. They recorded increase of 77.8 p.c. in Jammu province. This was due to the convertion which took place among lower castes of Hindu society to Sikh faith and most of the Sikhs also got recorded themselves as Sikhs and not Hindus in the census of 1931. The population of Jammu city in 1931 was 38,623 souls including 2135 Sikhs. Sikhism is against the caste system but inspite of this the Sikhs of Jammu are divided into many smaller sects and have caste distinction like Hindus. In the census of 1931, the seven sects of the sikhs of Jammu have been recorded. Their total strength has been shown against each sect as under:-

1. Akali = 8243
2. Keshdhari = 8988
3. Namdhari = 77
4. Nirankari = 2
5. Nirmala = 4
6. Sehjdhari = 4217

7. Sanatani = 4455 8. Others = 3296

From the perusal of above noted sects, one can well understand, that Keshdharis, Akalis, Sanatani and Sehjdhari were the dominant sects and others were insignificant. But at present Niramkaris have increased their strength. As already state, the Sikh faith, does not allow the caste distinction but the Sikhs of Jammu are generally known by their sects, castes, their hereditary professions and by their home towns. These distinctions made themselves to keep a separate identity from other Co-religious groups and individuals.

Their caste distinctions have been inherited by them from the Hinduism and are used a lever for superiorty. I will here-under quote few caste distinctions which are prevalent in the Sikhs of Jammu :-

1. Khatri Sikhs
2. Jat Sikhs
3. Brahamin Sikhs
4. Rajput Sikhs
5. Mahajan Sikhs
6. Labana Sikhs
7. Bowriye Sikhs
8. Bhatre Sikhs
9. Mahajbi Sikhs

The following categories are known either by place of their birth or by their home towns :-

1. Poonchi Sikhs
2. Mirpuri Sikhs
3. Muzafarabadi Sikhs
4. Kashmiri Sikhs
5. Ram Garhia Sikhs

Some Sikhs families are generally known by their profession but they also like to stick to their original castes to which they belonged before their convertion to Sikhs faith. They are few but have their separate identity and

they are as under :-

1. Sunare Sikhs (Gold Smith)
2. Tathiar Sikhs (Utencil Maker)
3. Sikligar Sikhs (Iron Smith who make iron utencils)

Majority of the Sikhs barring Labana Sikhs, and few families of Khatri Sikhs and Mahajan Sikhs of Jammu, are refugee from Pak occupied territory of Jammu and Kashmir state and Pakistan. Those who have migrated from the Punjab to Jammu are mostly skilled workers. The refugee Sikhs from Poonch and Muzafarabad came to Jammu as paupers. However, by dint of their hard labour over the years, have improved their economic conditions. At present, they are transporters, competent drivers, mechanices and contractors. Almost, they have a monoply in the road transport. Educated Sikhs are in the state services as well as in the Central Services. They hold high posts in medical, engineering and teaching profession. They possess a higher degree of ardent military spirit which had its origin in the war like percepts of Guru Govind Singh. Because of this background, most of them still give preference to either Army or Police Service. They also take active part in politics inspite of the fact, that they are a microscopic miniority. They have their own political party Akali Dal in Jammu but they generally align themselves with the ruling party.

They strictly follow the teaching of their Gurus and regularly visit Gurudawara. Like Hindu ladies, the Sikhs ladies are more religious minded then their men. After the partition of the country, they have constructed a chain of Gurudwaras in Jammu and its surrounding colonies. Gurudwaras came under Educational complex constructed by Mahant in the line of Nangali Sahib at Digiana and another Gurdawaras in Gandhi Nagar are most spacious and are visited by a good number of Sikh devotees on every

Sunday. Unlike Hindu temples they keep their Gurdawaras neat and clean.

They do not spend much on social functions and believe in simple marriages. But it seems, that certain families among Sikhs have started spending thousands of rupees on marriage parties.

Labana Sikhs who were formerly grain carriers but the introduction of modern wheeled traffic forced them to abandon their traditional profession and so they took to agriculture. In the past, they had their own dialect. But with the passage of time, they adopted either Dogri or Punjabi as their mother tongues. But in this respect the tilt seems to be in favour of Punjabi. They are good farmers and some of their families are now transporters. The educated Labanas are in the services.

Khatri and Mahajan Sikhs who before 1947 were dominant in business and trade circle of Jammu, havebeen overshadowed by other communities. Still, they are well off and are polite in their behaviour and outlook as compared with other sections of the Sikhs. Like their trade, and business they have also suffered in state services because of the politics of numbers. Aroras and Khoranas are the most prominent castes of Khatris in Jammu.

Poonchi and Mujafarbadi Sikhs belong to Brahamin castes. Brahamin converts Sikhism are known as Bambay. They are further divided into Sudan, Sanson, Dutta, Reena and Raina sub-castes. They are intelligent and have a command over the Sikh scriptures. Because, of this, one finds Poonchi Sikhs working as Granthis and Parchark in most of the Gurdawaras of the Punjab.

Before, 1947, they were concentrated in Poonch and Muzafarbad, but at present, they have highest concentration of their population in Jammu city and its adjoining colonies.

Punjabi Sikhs came to Jammu after 1950 as skilled workers, such as; carpenters, masons and mechanics and have contributed towards the development of Jammu region. They are competent and best in their skills and profession. As such their average output of work is much higher than any other counterparts in other communities. Most of them have settled in Nanak Nagar and possess small and neat houses of their own. They are secular in their outlooks and celebrate birthday of Vishavkarma with their Hindu counterparts and also do not carry any work on this day. They are now economically well off and send their wards to Public Schools, for education.

Most of the Jat Sikhs are migrant from Manawar, Deva Batala and Chamb area. They are agriculturist and have own dairies and poultry farms. Even some families are transporters. They are very hard workers and generally speak Lehndi language, a sub-dialect of Punjabi. Inter marriages among their community and Hindu Jat families are often conducted without any prejudice and restrictions.

Hindu Sikh relations over the years remained very cordial and in the third decade of this century they even fought in the cow agitation against the state government on a joint platform. Till upto 1950 to bring the first son as a Sikh was an order of the day in some Hindu families of Jammu. But unfortunately, the politics of Majority and minority and recent happenings in the Punjab created some doubt between Hindus and Sikhs. Even these factors could not deter both Hindus and Sikhs to have brotherly relations. But unfortunately the incident of Jan. 1989, in which some innocent Sikhs lost their lives, created a some doubt between Hindu Sikh relations. No doubt, this is a temporary phase and with the passage of time, they will reconcile to live like brothers as they had been living in the past.

Sikh Shrines

Some Gurudwaras in Jammu are very old however many have been built recently. The Gurudwaras at Nanak Nagar, Rehari Chowk, Ragunath Bazar and Digiana etc. are among the most famous in Jammu City. Besides, Nangali Sahib in Poonch, and Dera Baba Banda in Reasi etc. are the ancient Sikh shrines and are visited by a large number of devotees belonging to all faiths.

Nangali Sahib

Just 6 Km from the border distinct of Poonch, this highly reputed shrine is situated in the lap of picturesque hills and is believed to be the seat of divine power. Besides, Dera Shri Satpura Nangali Sahib is also a historic monument and devotees from far and wide come here to worship and seek the blessings of the Lord.

This historic shrine is a blessing of 10th Guru Sh. Govind Singh Ji who is believed to have sent his disciples to preach the region and fight against the evils of that time.

It is believed that when Mughal Emperor Aurangzeb forced Kashmiri Pandits to own Islam they went to the 9th Guru Sh. Teg Bahadur Ji and pleaded for help. At that time Guru Govind Singh Ji was in his teens and on seeing his father meditating and upset, asked for the reason. On being told that the sacrifice of a great man is essential he replied innocently- "None but you can only save them". Consequently Guru Teg Bahadur Ji sacrificed his life in the famous Chandni Chowk at Delhi.

Then the 10th Guru, Sh. Gobind Singh Ji thought that people should be trained to save their self respects from being hurted by the Mughal rulers and this formed the basis of Sikh religion.

The three greatmen namely Sant Baba Feru Singh Ji, Sant Baba Punjab Singh Ji, and Thakur Bhai Roocha

Singh Ji blessed with "Amrit" by the 10th Guru, had a great follower and disciple, Thakur Bhari Mela Singh Ji who built Dera Shri Satpura Nangali Sahib.

It is believed that Baba Feru Singh Ji before his death had prohibhited people from building Samadhi at his death place. But the followers could not resist themselves after his death and tried to built his Samadhi. But it is said that all the tree times they tried to build the Samadhi, it was washed away. Later, it is believed that Sant Bhai Mel Singh Ji built this shrine and he is considered the first Mahant of this highly respected shrines.

This sacred Gurudwara provides free langer to all visitors but Mutton and wine are not permitted in its premises. A tradition has been that the Mahant of this shrine must remain bachelor.

The Khalsa MLHS school at Jammu and a big Ashram at Digiana Jammu etc. are ascribed to this Gurudwara.

Being situated in village Santpura it is called Dera Shri Satpura Nangali Sahib and Baisakhi celebrations are worth seeing here.

Dera Baba Banda

An historic Gurudwara cum Samadhi dedicated to the heroic personality Banda Bahadur Bairagi near Reasi is the famous pilgrimage. The village where it is situated is now called Dera Baba Banda and one has to descened some distance from the Katra Reasi Road to reach this shrine.

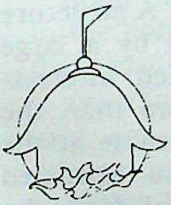
The Gurudwara contains besides the ashes of Banda Bahadur, some of his personal effects and arms including his large sword. The shrine is believed to have been built by Banda's great grandson over the hut in which his great ancestor resided. (The then village Thanaur where Banda lived for a year is now called Dera Baba Banda) The walls

of the building are painted and among others, bear portraits of the Sikhs Gurus and Banda and scenes from the life of Shri Krishna.

A "Beri" tree in the Gurudwara cum samadhi is held in high esteem as Banda is believed to have meditated under it.

Though idol worship is not prevalent in Sikh religion a Gurudwara in Dounthli Bazar, Jammu has an idol of Guru Nanak Ji. According to the Mahant of the Gurudwara, the idol was installed during the rule of Maharaja Gulab Singh and this Gurudwara is visited by a large number of devotees irrespective of caste or creed.

4 CHAPTER IV



MUSLIM SHRINES

Inhabited by the population of different religions which flourished in this land simultaneously Jammu is a unique example of secularism in the country and its people have always maintained secular traditions under all stresses and strains. A large number of Muslim shrines are scattered all over the region. These shrines are visited by the people of all faiths, all sects and it is awakening that among the devotees of these shrines, more people belong to the other communities then related to those shrines.

Pir Wudan Shah

One among such shrines is tomb of Pir Wudan Shah at satwari near Jammu Airport. People in flock visit this shrine on thursdays and offer prayers. A thread is tied there by the devotees and after their desires are fulfilled they come again to open the theared. It is said that pilots flying their planes in the adjoining airport have to salute the Pir before every take off. Pir Wudan Shah is also related with Guru Nanak Dev Ji who once visited him. About 4 centuries old shrines is very famous and is commonly known as Satwari Wala Pir.

Pir Roshan Shah Wali

Another secular shrine in the heart of the city is the tomb of Pir Roshan Shah Wali near town hall. A structure of about 14th century, this tomb is visited by a large number of people irrespective of caste and creed. Interestingly Hindu and Sikh devotees are seen more than the Muslims. It is believed that Pir Roshan Wali came at the this place with a message of peace, love and so attracted a large number of people. Since he was very tall man, the people gave him the name of "Naugaza" (Having a height of 9 yards). It is believed that the cherished desires of the devotees are fulfilled in this shrine.

Pir Mitha

Another tomb of "Pir Mitha" stands in the heart of Jammu city. The area is now known as Pir Mitha. The Pir (saint) was so polite and soft spoken that he was loved by Hindus and Muslims alike. Though his name was Syed Abdul Rehman, people called him Pir Mitha meaning sweat saint. Syed Abdul Rehman belonged to Shia Sect. According to another version the saint accepted only sweets from the people so he was named Pirmitha. Now the shrine is ruined and few people know about it.

SHAH-DARA-SHARIEF-A symbol of communal amity

Jammu and Kashmir, the crown of India and famous for scenic splendour attracts millions of visitors from all over the world and it adds more to their charm when they find the spirit of secularism, co-existence and common brotherhood every where in this state of many religions and faiths.

Besides tourists, this hilly state is the heaven for pilgrims who pay their holy visit to the number of its shrines and hardly is there any town or city which does not have a shrine of its own and many among such shrines are the symbol of secularism.

Shah-Dara-Sharief, the most popular among such shrines in the border district of Rajouri, 177 Km. from Jammu, is daily visited by the devotees, in flock.

This 19th century shrine, about 29 Km. from Rajouri and situated at a beautiful hillock has historical background besides number of legends. It is most inspiring that this holy shrine belonging to Muslims was built by a Hindu ruler, Maharaja Gulab Singh- founder of Jammu and Kashmir state.

According to available historical references, once (1820

AD) Maharaja Ranjit Singh of Punjab sent his General of army (Gulab Singh) to defeat Asghar (Agarullah, according to English Translation of Gulab Nama Page 163 Foot notes) Khan in the hills comprising of Rajouri (Ancient Rajapuri). He took 150 companies with him but only 25 persons could keep company with him. At last, when he encamped at Shahdara about 29 Km. from Rajouri with one of the division at Thanna of Rajouri district, he went to a saint Baba Ghulam Shah Badshah who was a wise and God fearing person.

Shah was sitting under a tree with a twing of apricot in his hand and intoxicated with the wine of devotion (However according to legends the saint had himself sent his disciple to bring Gulab Singh). When Gulab Singh arrived, the Shah smiled on looking at him. When he was inquired as to the cause of his mysterious smile, he said, "I smiled on the miracle of the infallible Almightly who has committed to the charge of your exalted personality so much performance of the expedition of the government and the management & affairs of sovereignity, climb atop this mountain and cast a glance around and whatever countries you see, the eagle of your prosperity will some day spread its wings of sway over these places".

He thus went high up on the top of the mountain to cast his glance in the direction of Jammu, Kashmir, Kishatwar and Tibet.

Gulab Singh was pleased with reculse and expressed his intention to grant a Jagir. At this, the reculse said, "I have a piece of land granted to me since long, if the Shah-dara locality is added, it will sruffice". Consequently, the "Sanad" for both the places was issued to him that continue in possession of his offspring to this day. Later, when prophesy of the saint turned true and Gulab Singh became Maharaja of the Jammu and Kashmir state, he visited the Shah-Dara with devotion. As the saint was not alive at the

time he built a shrine there to pay his homage to the great saint.

A large number of devotees, irrespective of religion, cast or creed visit the shrine very day and interestingly, devotees are provided with free accommodation, food and other facilities. Food served to the devotees is either in the 'Langar' or devotees if desire, may obtain free ration from the shrine authorities and cook their food themselves.

Thousand of Hindus, Sikhs, besides their Muslim brethern visit shah dara sharief with faith and devotion and it is believed that their cherished desires are fulfilled.

Now the large scale development has made this shrine easily accessible to everyone and is attracting more devotees from every nook and corner of the state as well as other parts of the country.

This great secular shrine clearly shows that the spirit of secularism existed in the minds of the people since ancient times and no power on earth can separate them on the name of caste or religion.

Balle Da Bagh

About 30 Km from Jammu and just 3.5 Km from Akhnoor, on Akhnoor Jourian road, a "Mazaar" of Baba Faiz Baksh Syed Bukhari is situated on the right side of the road. This sacred shrine, equally important for the people belonging to all religions and faiths is commonly known as "Balle Da Bagh". Though this small shrine looks like any ordinary Mazaar of other Pir's (Muslim saints) it has very high value among the village folk as only seven rounds (prikarmas) of the Mazaar inside the room and seven outside the room makes the victims of Dogbite free from the fear of hydrophobia (Halqaa, in local words).

In earlier times several people would die of rabies caused by Dogbite as there were no medicines or injections

available for its prevention and control. Even now this facility is available only in major hospitals of Cities and rural population has still to depend upon the age old traditional means for prevention and treatment of many diseases including rabies.

After appearance of symptoms of Hydrophobia no medicine can save the patient, but it can be prevented by acting just after the dogbite, both in Allopathy and other medical sciences. Same is the case with this sacred shrine. If the victims visit the shrine just after the dogbite and offer prayers besides taking 7 Parikarama's of the Mazaar according to the instructions of the priest, it is believed that Hydrophobia never occurs. Only eating of Mutton has to be avoided for a specific period. After sometime, the patient has to again visit the shrine for fulfillment of "minnat", offered previously by him. It is a well established beliefthat hydrophobia never occurs to such victims.

This shrine is about 450 years old according to the priest serving the Fakir's Mazaar. The present priest Mohd. Abdullah, 80, belongs to the 7th generation engaged in service of this Ziarat. This family is in this service since the Fakir's arrival at this place. It is believed that Baba Faiz Baksh Syed Bukhari came from Afghanistan to Jammu about 470 years ago to spread the message of Almightly Allah. On reaching Jammu he lived in the forests of Jammu for a brief period. During his stay in Jammu he used to purchase food and other essential commodities from a shopkeeper with the promise that he will pay him later.

It is said that after some days the shopkeeper got suspicious and demanded his dues. As the Baba had no money he created two Jackals by his divine power and left them towards the nearby area. The jackals after biting many villagers, their animals and spreading panic among the people returned to Baba and disappeared. The Baba told the people that those who will offer six Anna's at the

spot where Jackals disappeared, would not suffer from hydrophobia. At this all the victims of Jackal bite did the same and Baba paid the dues to the shopkeeper. Then he left the forest and came at the place now known as Balle Da Bagh.

As the Baba spreaded the message of peace, love and co-existence people of all sects and religions started paying regular visits to him. He was loved by one and all.

In Balle Da Bagh, an old person belonging to Arin sect of Muslims, an agriculture specialist, appointed incharge of the garden by the then Maharaja served the Baba selfessly for many years. He had no son. So one day he expressed his desire of a son to the Baba.

Baba Faiz told him that he will request the Almighty, but for getting a son he would have to die. The old man agreed and later it is believed that when a son was born to the wife of old man, the latter died. The Baba himself looked after the child and brought him up.

One day when Baba announced that he is leaving this world to join the Almighty's court, the son of old agriculture specialist cried. Then Baba told him that the victims of dogbite would be cured just by taking parikarma's of his Mazaar and by offering six anna's. There upon, after Baba's death, a Mazaar was built and people came here to pay their tributes. As some victims of dogbite were cured as per instructions given by the Baba himself, the place gained popularity. It may be reminded that only those are cured whom the symptoms of hydrophobia have not appeared. Once hydrophobia is appeared there is no use of coming over here.

An annual "Urs" is celebrated on the thursday of middle "Jyeshtha" (13 April to 14 May) every year which is attended by thousands of people from even far off places. Another annual fair is celebrated on every Ist Navratra.

It is worth to mention that in rural areas the "mad dogs"

often bite animals thus spreading this disease. And if Lords of those animals visit the shrine and offer "minnat", their animals remain free from the rabies so the people in large number continue to visit the Mazaar daily.

The priests have built Sarai's for the devotees coming from the far off places and free food and blankets etc. are provided to them. There is no compulsion of "Charhawa" (offerings) but traditionally Minnat of five rupees and twenty five paisa is in practice for victims of dogbite.

The present building of the shrine is about 120 years old but according to many elderly persons shrine is no doubtly, very old. As the number of Hindu's and Sikh's visiting the shrine is more than their Muslim brethern, the shrine can easily be termed as another symbol of secularism.

Panj Pir

A shrine named Panj Pir situated near Amar Palace Museum on the outskirts of Jammu city on the Jammu-Kashmir National Highway has gained popularity in recent times though it is very old. Devotees in large number visit the shrine on Thursdays. Besides, drivers plying their vehicles on the National Highway can be daily seen stopping their vehicles and offering cash etc. to Pir. Until last decade (1980-1990) the shrine lay uncared but recently a roof etc. has been provided by the devotees besides providing drinking water, resting place and other necessary facilities for the devotees who come from the far off places in the city and other places. Though number of legends have grown up regarding the shrine recently no authentic reference is available and so there is no authentic knowing of it. However, it is a well established belief that cherished desires of the people are fulfilled.

Ziarat of Shah Farid-ud-Din Sahib

A ziarat constructed over a tomb of Shah Farid-ud-Din, a great Muslim saint and is situated in Kishtwar in Doda district. It is believed that Shah Farid-ud-Din came to Kishtwar during the reign of Raja Jai Singh (1656-1664 A.D.) to propagate Islam. He hailed from Baghdad and came to India in the times of Mughal emperor Shah Jahan.

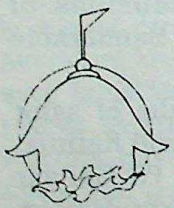
Shah Farid was blessed with a number of saintly children. Two of them, Hazrat Akhyar-ud-Din and Syed Anwar-ud-Din lie buried in the Ziarat in which lies the tomb of Shah Farid himself. Shah Farid lived to ripe old age of 99 and his diet comprised bread of barley flour and a vegetable sauce. He is stated to have done many miraculous deeds and a big fair is held here on the 7th Ashad every year. It is attended by thousands of people from far and wide.

Bhandarkote Cave

Their is a small cave at Bandorekaote just above the bridge over river Chenab. Sheikh Zain-ud-Din Wali is believed to have stayed in it for many years. The Sheikh who hailed from Palmar (Kishtwar) later moved to Kashmir where there is a big shrine at Aish Muqam on the Anantnag-Pahalgam road. He was a principal disciple of Sheikh Nur-ud-Din sahib Wali, patron saint of Muslims of Kashmir. There is inscription on a rock at Bandarkote about 12 Km from Kishtwar.

Among other popular Muslim shrines, Tombs of saint Garib Shah at Samba, Pir Fazal Shah at Parlibund Kathua, Pir Chhatar Shah at village Nagri near Kathua, Pir Gandar Shah in Bhaderwah, Pir Choota Shah at Sakhi Maidan near Mendhar and Ziarat Asrar-I-Sharief in Kishtwar are notable and visited regularly by thousands devotees belonging to all faiths.

5 CHAPTER V



JAIN AND BUDDHA SHRINES

Jain and Buddhist Temples

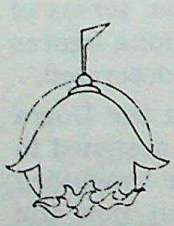
Jammu region has a scanty population of Jains and Buddhists. While Jains live in the city, Buddhists are mostly found in Paddar and its surrounding areas in the Doda district of Jammu.

Among the Jain temples, most beautiful and famous is the Jain temples at patel chowk in the heart of the old city. The images inside the temple include Lord Mahavira and other Tirthankaras. They are all of marble. Besides, Jain School on Rani Park road in the city has also a small Jain temple which is visited by a large number of Jains. A new Jain temple in the developing Jain colony of Jammu is under construction.

As most of the Buddhists belong to Paddar area, many Buddha Gompas are situated in Paddar and many of them are wooden structures. However, one of the enigmas of Jammu's religious history has been the absence of any Buddhists foundations or remains. The Puzzle was all the more surprising because in ancient times Buddhists had one of its prominent seats in the vicinity of Jammu. This was at Sialkote (ancient name Sakala) now in Pakistan. Besides, a positive evidence of existence of a Buddhist establishment at Ambarran near Akhnoor (28 Km from Jammu) was brought to light a few decades ago. Among the terracotas found there, were Buddha heads, torsos of bodies and pieces of drapery belongings to Buddha figures of monks and laymen and women profusely decorated.

The terracota Buddha heads, now placed in the Dogra Art Gallery, Old Secretriate Jammu have been assigned to the 8th or 9th century A.D. So it can easily be concluded that Buddhism once flourished in Jammu but now the religion remains confined within Paddar are of Kishtwar in Doda.

6 CHAPTER VI



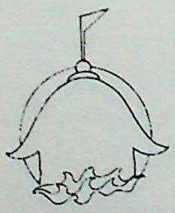
CHRISTIAN SHRINES

CHURCHES

Though number of Christians in Jammu province is not large, there are a number of Churches. The Protestant Church on the Residency road Jammu is the oldest in Jammu. It originally belonged to the Church of Scotland (England). The Roman Catholic Church on B.C. Road near Jewel chowk Jammu was built in 1952. A newly built Church-ST. Marry's Garrison Church on Asia Chowk-Satwari road is among the most beautiful Churches of Jammu. Situated on the road side it is visited by a large number of people. Another Church near Radio colony is also among the old Churches of Jammu. The Churches of Udhampur and Akhnoor are also among the famous churches.

Heavy rush of devotees is witnessed in Churches on the eve of birth anniversary of Jesus Christ, 25th of December every year besides other pious occassions. On such occassions Hindus besides their Christian brethern also participate in large number.

7 CHAPTER VII



TOURIST ATTRACTIONS OF JAMMU

Tourism Potential

As Jammu is the rail head for the state, it has somewhat inevitably become known merely as the gateway to Kashmir but this is most unfortunate because the region has all the ingredients for a delightful holiday. More than 20 lac pilgrims visit the world famous shrine of Mata Vaishno Devi every year and if tourist resorts of Jammu are properly developed and highlighted pilgrims are bound to enjoy their holidays at such resorts also.

Jammu, no doubt is full of variegated charms to hypnotise the visitors of sundry treats. It is full of scenic splendour, pilgrimage, artistic and historical wealth and charming cultural vignettes from Lakhanpur-the gateay of the state to Banihal, Poonch and Paddar etc.

The city of Jammu itself has a fine location sprawling on the banks of the river Tawi surronded by lakes, hills, temples and forts etc. Everywhere in the city, the skyline is pierced with the spires of temples earning it the epithet of temples city. The dawn and dusk on the Tawi valley offers views of vendure charms.

Out side the Jammu city the lush green meadows of Sannasar and Patnitop etc. flanked on all sides by the thick lands of lofty conifers on the mountain slopes are among the most enchanting tourist spots. Bhadarwah in Doda district is a valley of resplendent green and sparkling, springing and singing waters. Noorie-Chaam near Poonch is a well known waterfall associated with the name of celebrated Mughal queen NoorJahan. Mansar and Sruinsar, the two popular lakes of Jammu are beautiful picnic spots.

For archaeologists & historians and tourists who want to see some what striking in the art of temple architecture and sculpture, there are number of places in and around Jammu city.

That is why the tourist inflow in Jammu has increased manifold and the days are not far when it will find suitable

place in the tourist map of India boosting the economy of the state. However, the brief spell of terrorism in the entire state has, no doubt, Capped the tourism potential temporarily and this is sure that the situation is very soon going to take a positive turn.

Patni Top & Sannasar

Situated at a height of 2024 meters and about 112 Kms. from Jammu on the Jammu-Srinagar highway, Patni Top is fastly gaining popularity as a beautiful hill resort of Jammu.

The famous hill station is visited by thousands of tourists every year to enjoy cool & salubrious environs. Moreover, tourists come here to enjoy the thick fog that engulfs this "Queen of Jammu Hills" in summer. Inflow of tourists is on the rise and even many have to seek accomodation in the nearby stations during the months of May to July due to heavy rush of visitors who book their accomodation in advance anticipating intense heat of summer in the plains. Even during winter months, snow-fall attracts many and they occupy every room of the accomodation available there.

Interestingly, this place is located at such a point from where the less discovered Sannasar, Batote - the cup shaped hill station and Kud etc. are easily approachable and tourists while staying in Patni Top can easily visit these more beautiful hamlet resorts.

No doubt, these hills are paradise for the trekkers but apart from scenic splendour this place has something more for the adventurers and believers. This area is best known among the locals for fairies. Yes ! the legendary fairies are still believed to wander in the hills and deep forests of Sannasar just 19 Kms from Patni Top.

The serpentine & narrow road linking Sannasar with Patni Top presents panoramic view of thick fog and tall

Deodar trees spreading on both sides of the road.

Though it is the most enchanting hill resort it has far less facilities than any other hill station of the State. In the lap of the nature the place has great tourism potential for the number of reasons.

Until recently Sannasar was a deep mountain lake surrounded by the forests but a side of the lake was broken somehow & maximum of lake water flowed down towards the Chenab river flowing below. And then appeared terraced lush green land. But now the lake has again been filled with water restoring its old glory.

It is a place of resplendent green and sparkling, springing and singing waters. Terraced fields spread on all sides. Swaying giant conifers spreading endlessly on mountain slopes, glistering snowy peaks and waffing willoy clouds playing hide and seek with sun and amid all natural vista springs are enough to make a visitor spell bound. Thinly populated, Sannasar remains snow bound for most part of the winter season and mercury seldom cross 20° C in summer months.

But strange that despite more beauty and tourism potential, J&K Tourism Development Corporation vis-a-vis J&K Tourism Department have not been able to provide desired facilities for the middle class tourists.

On the other hand Patni Top is easily approachable being on the highway & is prominent on the tourist map of J&K. It has all kinds of facilities for the tourists including club, hotels, Dak bunglow and the youth hostel. Besides, tented accomodation on cheaper rates is also being provided.

Surrounded by meadows, terraced fields and peaks of Shivalik hills there is a tranquil timelessness that calls for no activity. The tall pine and deodar shaded grounds seems ending nowhere.

Unfortunately when the growing militancy in J&K has badly shaked the economy of the state, government does not appear to be interested in promoting tourism. Instead it has allowed to enhance the rates of accomodation in the state owned huts in these hill resots making it difficult for a middle class family to meet up the expenses in these tourist retreats.

It will be advisable to the Tourism Department that if sight seeing group tours are organised itself by the JKTDC for Sannasar, Kud, Batote, Sudh Mahadev and other nearby places from Patni Top, more and more tourists are bound to come here to have glimpses of the natural beauty of Jammu hills.

Situated between the Trikuta hills (Mata Vaishno Devi) and Pir Panjal range (Jawahar Tunnel) this vast hilly area was once the centre of a very old civilisation before the arrival of Aryans Who not only defeated those people but also changed their culture and religions.

Waiting for the adventurers and explorers, this land of meadows, deep forests and "fairies" has something more to offer like a virgin who waits to offer her virginity.

Mansar & Sruinsar Lakes

A number of shrines, ruined structures and lakes in Jammu are believed to be related with Pandava's. However, it is difficult for a researcher to ascertain the fact. But without taking into consideration such legends, history can never be written and that is why some disputes generally surface among historians regarding these legendary places.

Two lakes of Jammu namely Mansar and Sruinsar are believed to be related with Pandavas and even their formation is attributed to them. Mansar lake is about 70 Km towards east of Jammu via Samba while its distance

via Sidhra-Sruinsar is only about 50 Kms. This beautiful lake with a circumference of about 4 Km has been provided with all necessary facilities required by tourists as well as pilgrims by the J&K State tourism department. Besides, a deer park on the bank of the lake has been provided with an aim to protect wild life. Deep bluish water of the lake is covered by Lotus flowers and leaves.

This lake is deeply associated with the religious faith of the people and a number of Hindu families have a tradition to celebrate the Mundan ceremony of their male child on this lake. The first hair cutting of their male child is performed in the famous temple of "Kali Shesh Nag" on the bank of the lake. An annual fair is also held on this lake in June every year.

The other lake-Sruinsar, also towards east of Jammu is situated at a distance of about 35 Km. The distance between both the lakes is merely 16 Km by road and only a hillock divide the two. With an inaccessible island in its centre, Sruinsar lake has an circumference of about 3 Km which changes according to weather conditions. Overlooking a ravine on its north the lake is surrounded by the pine covered hills on three sides. Significantly, this lake too is of religious importance and fishings stands striclty prohibited in both the lakes since ancient times. Offering of eatables to the fish and other creatures is considered beneficial among Hindus besides taking a round (Parikarama) of the lakes.

A legend has it that these lakes were formed when Arjuna used his arrow on the earth to bring out water on the surface. According to the belief, before the Mahabharta battle, Pandavas during their exile from Hastinapur for 13 years were living in the Uttarakhand (North zone) and while in Jammu region, one day their mother Kunti felt thirst but Pandavas found no water as this belt of Jammu is Kandi (waterless). Yudhistra sent his brthers in all

directions for futile search of water and finally Arjuna used his arrow on the earth which entered from one place and came out from another spot, few kms from the first. Both the spots released enough water to form two lakes. Kunti and others quenched their thirst.

Both Mansar and Sruinsar have link beneath the earth's surface and it is proved by the fact that during every six months period both the lakes changes their water level simultaneously. When one has high water level the other has low.

According to another legend, after Mahabharta battle was over, Pandavas decided to perform 'Ashvamedha Yajna' to redeem their souls from the sins of killing of their own relations in the battle. After the Yajna, a horse followed by Arjuna and his army was left towards all kingdom with a hording on horse's forehead challenging the kings to either accept Pandava's supermacy or show superiority in the battlefield.

After crossing over many forests, mountains, rivers and winning all states in the way the horse and Arjuna etc. reached at a place ruled by Vabruvahan. The state was Manipur with its capital Babbapura. Actually Vabruvahan was own son of Arjuna from his Gandharva wife chitrangdha but was brought up by Nag Kanya Aloopi, both being wives of Arjuna whom he had married long ago.

As soon as the horse reached in the vicinity of Manipur, it was captured by Vabruvahan. But after knowing that horse belonged to his father Arjuna, he offered to return the horse alongwith valueable gifts. But Arjuna unaware of the fact that Vabruvahana was his own son, abused and called him the son of a prostitute as Vabruvahna was trying to avoid the war. Vabruvahana could not tolerate the remarks and a fierce battle fought between the both, erupted.

After heavy fight, Vabruvahan chopped off the head of

Arjuna. This war was fought at the place now called 'Khoon', about 15 km from Mansar by road. As a result of heavy bloodshed blood flowed like a river and the place got a name, khoon. Still a nallah in khoon village has red stones and it is a fact that every ordinary stone, poured into this nallah turns red due to the effect of that bloodshed.

On the other side, when Aloopi, the daughter of Naga king of Pataal-'Kali Shesh Nag' learnt about the news of Arjuna's death, she cried and sent a minister, Pundreek to his father demanding Sanjeevni Mani to give new life to Arjuna. But it is believed that the serpent king refused to give Sanjeevni Mani and then Vabruvahan went himself to Pataal Loka through a tunnel (Surang) and snatched the Mani from his grandfather after defeating him. At this, the serpents filled the tunnel with water to block the way of Vabruvahana but the latter built another tunnel by using his arrows and came out alongwith the mani and this way Arjuna was gifted with a second life.

As the legend goes on the tunnel through which Vabruvahana entered into Pataal Loka was called as 'Surangsar' and the other through which he came out alongwith Mani was named Manisar. With the passage of time, the lakes got the name Sruinsar and Mansar. This story finds mention in the holy scriptures of Kashyap rishi.

In my view, similarity between the names of Vabruvahana and Babbapura (now Babore) strengthens the legend and it is also a historical fact that until 14th century A.D. Babbapura had remained capital of this area and Vabruvahana had its rule once.

Since people of Jammu as well as Kashmir are serpent worshippers since ancient times, propitiating 'Kali Shesh Naga' in Mansar lake is part of the belief that 'Kali Shesh Naga' has his abode in the lake.

Some people claim to have seen a snake with five or more mouths in both the lakes but veracity of their claim remains

untested so far.

Bagh-i-Bahu

Inagurated on August 26.1981, Bagh-i-Bahu is a recreational splendour which attracts more than 20 lacs tourists every year, who visit Jammu enroute their pilgrimage to the holy Vasihno Devi cave. Besides, it is the only place for Jammuites available in the city for recreational activities as well as picnics.

From the most parts of the city, Bagh-I-Bahu looks like hanging and if called "hanging garden" it would be more appropriate. Still in the stages of development it has many facilities for the tourists and locals and the fun lovers. There was a plan to develop the waste land around the historic Bahu fort into an enchanting garden. As per plans Bagh-i-Bahu was scheduled to have all facilities for the tourists of all walks of life. Overlooking the foothills of "Trikuta" and snow clad Pir Panjal mountains, the project was proposed to be completed in four phases.

In the first phase, the project was to have beautiful landscape from the base of Bahu Fort to Sidrah near Bye Pass bridge. The plan also included the wild life enclosures beside ornamental plants spread all along the bank of river Tawi with recreational facilities available in the whole strech.

But of the bad luck of Jammuites, the plan could not be materialised due to more than one reasons. No adequate funds were provided as a result of which even the first phase of the garden could not be completed.

It was in 1984 when the work started again and the perishing glory of the garden took a new turn. A new VIP guest house near the wall of Bahu Fort was ordered to be completed soon. It was decided to construct a small reservoir inside the fort from which water through a channel was proposed to be left out. Also the work on renovation of the fort with a view to give its original look

was inititated. The Archaeological Survey of India (ASI) was also got involved. Thereafter a fountain with latest motors was also installed in a small lake in the uppermost part of the garden. This fountain amidst multicolour lights still attract everybody from several parts of the city.

To complete the project earlier, the work on filling up of dry nallahs and cutting of hillock to pave the way for plantation of varities of ornamental and other plants started round the clock. Services of experts from Electric, Floriculture, Wild life and PHE departments were utilized and within two years the garden became the most beautiful in J&K which matched Mughal Gardens of Kashmir. The expansion and beautification of Bagh-I-Bahu continued uniterrupted. A fish pond just inside the main entrance became an added attraction for the visitors of the garden Many species of multicoloured fish were also kept in the pond.

Now a days Bagh-I-Bahu has found a place among the best gardens of India. A restaurant owned by JKTDC offer the visitors refreshment but as the rates are so high and preparations so poor, every local visitor avoid to sit in the Restaurant.

Because of ideal location on the left bank of river Tawi, Bagh-i-Bahu is being made more accessible by providing another link from the old city by constructing of second bridge and moreover, if full stretch from the base of Bahu-Fort Sidhra is also developed as proposed, whole of the area including Mahamaya city forest will become a paradise. Recently boating has also been introduced in the artificial lake of Bagh-i-Bahu.

Jhajjar Kotli

About 33 Km from Jammu, Jhajjar Kotli is a famous picnic spot of Jammu. Situated on the left bank of a small river Jhajjar it attracts thousands of Jammuites and

tourists every Sunday. Being on the Jammu-Srinagar National highway it is easily accessible to all.

For a delightful holiday it has all the facilities for the visitors. A beautiful and spacious park on the left side of river Jhajjar is sufficient to accomodate thousands of visitors at a time. A tourist Dak Bunglow, Jharna Cafeteria on the roadside, a private bar and many restaurants and shops are there to cater the needs of the tourists.

Few years ago a small artificial lake was also developed by the state government but now it does not exist there. It is hoped that the state government will continue its development in the forth coming years.

Rajinder Park/Ranbir Canal

Another picnic spot of Jammu is the Rajinder Park surrounded by two parts of Ranbir canal. Since ancient times Jammuites have favoured this part to beat the intense heat during summer months. Hundreds of families and thousands of other groups can be seen camping in this park daily for the whole day during summer months. The ice cold water of Ranbir canal gives respite to the people from the high temperatures. Before 1947 this was the only picnic spot in Jammu. Being situated in the heart of city it is easily accessible to all.

Padar : a lesser known remote Valley.

Over three centuries ago padar was an autonomous valley ruled by its own Ranas. But in about 1650 AD it was conquered by Raja Chattar Singh of Chamba and was made a part of that state. In about 1834, the people of the valley resisted the troops of General Zorawar Singh on their way to Zanskar, as a result of which the Dogra general attacked the valley, pulled down the Fort of Chattargerh and annexed it to Jammu Raj of which it has remained a part ever since.

Padar territory consists of the valley of the Chenab from a little below Siri upto the boundary of Chamba, about 48 Km long in addition to the valley of Bhutna along the Bhutna river. It is enclosed by mountains bearing perpetual snow and glaciers which end off at too high a level for them to project into the main valley. Most of the mountains in sight from below are either the rocky or the forest covered lower slopes. The cultivated part is very small in extent and as a result, the inhabitants have very limited necessities and live very simple, hard and quite life. For many things e..g. tea, tobacco, salt, wheat, match sticks, kerosene etc. they have to depend on the outer world of their own.

Atholi the chief place of the valley is on an alluvial plateau, about 2000 metres above the sea level and 60 metres above the river. A little away stands the fort of Gulabgarh, a toy looking affair a square work with round corner towers. On the same plateau are groups of trees, sheltering some wooden temples and shrines. There is the collection of villages in the four to seven kilometres below Atholi, where is the widest opening in the whole tracts. There are some small villages at intervals further up the two valleys.

As land (mountains) is rocky and barren always covered by the thick layers of snow, agriculture production is near nil and mostly people depend on meat. Although, the local people have adjusted themselves according to the conditions of Padar the employees from other parts of the state posted in Padar live very miserable life. They have no facilities of any kind which they enjoy in their respective native places. Sometimes they live without even matchsticks for several days then what to talk about other things. Electricity is near a dream as a result of which employees hesitate to join their duties in the remotest place of the state. It is near impossible for a person other than a local

to remain there for whole of the year and once when Dr. Farooq Abdullah, Former Chief Minister visited the valley, he said, if a government employee stay here for even a month it is enough. But to the dismay of the people he never tried to make the remotest valley accessible. Not only he, but none of the leaders has ever highlighted the difficulties of the people living there.

On the other side climate of Padar is severe. From its elevation, and the considerable moisture of its air, there is a great fall of snow in the winter, which sometimes gets to be more then three feet deep and stays four or five months and more over there is a good chance of its falling at unseasonable times also. Besides, the valley is so surrounded by high mountains that sun is seen only for short hours. The sunshine is also intercepted by the clouds. These conditions make it difficult for the crops to ripen. However, some fruits trees, especially walnut trees are common. But the want of sunshine affects the fruits which do not ripe well. There is the edible pie, Pinus Geradiana, at certain places. Wild caraway also grows here and is gathered in quantities to be carried to Jammu for sale. Fine type of deodar forests occur at slopes favourable for lumbering.

Occasionally avalanches occur at long intervals in the years when unusually heavy snow has fallen on the mountains. They come from the ranges on the south, with their summits at a level of 4620 to 5000 metres from the height down to the Padar valley is a fall of 2770 to 3100 metres in 9 Kilometres. This phenomenon may occur in the month of December to January. The snow is described as being like flour.

The flow of it seems a real drainage of snow from a great area of the surface into the one line of the gorge.

The people of the valley are in great part Thakurs with a few Muslims. Besides, there are a few families of Bhotos

or Buddhists from Zansakar on the further side of the great range. The people seem to have good deal given to serpent worship and perform it as a part of their observance of the rites of the Hindu religion.

Though very remote and inaccessible, Padar is particularly known for its best and the costliest blue sapphire which commands great respect in the world markets. The sapphire mines are situated at an altitude of more than 14000 feet and therefore very difficult to approach.

Padar includes this small valley which leads down from the great snowy range till it joins the Chenab valley. From Padar, a road goes upto Bhutna and crosses to Zanksar (District Leh) by the high, snowy and difficult pass named Umasi La by the Zanskar people and the Bardhar by the "Padaris" & the Dogras. Commencing from the lower portion, patches of cultivation occur on both sides of the river. Several hamlets of a few houses are also seen. Some of the villages have walnut trees but their fruit does not ripen well as in other parts of Padar certainly for want of sunshine. At one part there is an oak wood which grows on both hillsides. Deodar, older, horse-chestnut, and ash trees also grow.

The hillsides of the valley have a fall of about a thousand feet, and are the extermities of spurs from greater ridges lofty mountains, 5540 to 6155 metres high. Above chishot, 2500 metres is a pine forest which ceases near Hamuri, 2525 metres. Here the valley opens and has a more stony look. The one conspicuous thing here is the masses of a rock that have fallen down from the cliffs above or carried down in snow-falls. These have caused a few small lakes by damming the water of the river which flows down over them. Around Himuri, there is much cultivation with irrigation facilities. Beyond this village, the valley is open and bare, but very rocky, covered with huge boulders. There is now wood except in the ravines, where groves of

poplar and walnut grow. The herbaceous vegetation on the bank is very luxuriant.

The highest village of any size in the Bhutna valley is Machel, 2980 metres, about 52 Kilometres from river chenab. There are some signs of cultivation and on the mountains sides are some signs of cultivation and on the mountains sides are some stunted deodars but at a height of about 3000 metres, there seems no sign of these trees.

Further, Sunjan at a height of about 3400 metres is the highest inhabited place. Inhabitants of this alpine locality grow peas grim, wheat and buckwheat etc. Girm is a kind of barley.

Beyond this valley is open, steep, rocky and barren hills. But near Sunjan is a plain land of the size of about 3 kilometres length and 1 kilometre in width. Small groves of willow are found scattered all over this levelled land. At some places grass peeps out where there is no snow but the lower side is swamby. At its upper side are two lower ridges of boulders. On the other side of which lies another plain much more barren and desolate looking than the previous one. This plain is surrounded by mountains from all sides. The southern slopes are covered with birch trees.

It is remindable that trunk of the birch trees is made up of thin layers which were used in ancient times as paper. Almost all ancient books were written on these layers which is a natural kind of paper. Called "Bhoj Patra", birch trees are found at places having more than 3000 metres height.

The upper part of the valley is closetted by a glacier over which lies the road to Padam in Zanskar Sub Division of Ladakh.

The toughness and insecurity of the residents of this valley is evident form certain physical events which befell upon the inhabitants of Hamuri. In the mutiny year of

1857, large scale snow avalaunches dammed the river Bhutna and people fearing submergence of the valley had to leave their houses but luckily the river water found an outlet in the mountains and thus the village was saved from submerging under the river water. About two years later, heavy snow fall created another problem for the inhabitants and their houses were buried beneath the thick snow.

However, with help of the people of neighbouring villages the village was saved as they dug out all the people alive.

Earthquakes occurred in the same century also damaged the houses of the villages and further more resulted in large scale landslides.

However, now the scene has changed but still their life is unsafe and what is needed is more development of this remote area so that all facilities could be provided to the inhabitants of this lesser known valley as well as to the tourists and other visitors. At the same time it is also necessary that their cultural identity is not harmed.

Bani and Basohli

Bani

Situated at an altitude of 1280 meters and about Kms from Jammu and Kms from Basohli-the town famous for ancient miniature painting school. Bani nestles in the lap of Shivalik range of mountains. This beautiful hill resort is being developed into full fledged tourist resort. A land at the foot of one of the most beautiful mountain range-Bani is sure to refresh any body's mind. Surrounded all round by dense forests of conifers pine scented hills, this place matches the scenic and climatic ambience of Liddar valley of Kashmir. Bani is picturesquely situated along the left bank of river Sewa.

This retreat provides a symbol of magic greenery and

colours of snow clad mountains throbbing with the clear blue water of Sewa river. Still undiscovered by tourists and others and unravaged by time this retreat beguiles with its mystic beauty. High up in the hills, the nomadic shephered tend their flock and lead the same rustic life as their forefathers did.

Several short treks across the small hill ranges connect it with Billawar, Bhaderwah via Sarthal and Patni Top via Dudu Basantgarh.

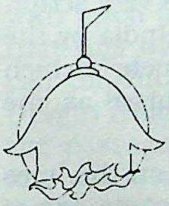
Basohli

Basohli town is famous for its Eighth century world famous Pahari painting school. This town is also famous for its exquisite Palace of great art & architecture. Ruins of this palace are now being developed as garden complex. This ancient town is also very famous for Pasmina shawls, perhaps the only place outside the Kashmir valley.

Sarthal

Another beautiful place about 23 Km from Bani is Sarthal which remains snowbound and inaccessible for about 6 months in a year. It wakes to life only during the spring and summer when the Gujjars and other nomads arrive with their flocks of animals into the area in search of green pastures. However, no facility of any kind is available to the visitors till date. But it is hoped that J&K government will come forward to develop this place into a nice hill resort.

8 CHAPTER VIII



CULTURAL HERITAGE

DOGRA'S AND THEIR CULTURAL HERITAGE

The Dogras are known for their valour and have won a name in many battles fought by them. But their cultural heritage as well as other aspects of their life are lesser known outside this region and there has been a deep rooted feeling among the people of Jammu that they have little cultural or historical heritage to boast of as there was no printed literature available on the subject. A researcher, therefore find himself groping in the darkness while trying to dig out the hidden facts about this land of the Dogras.

This is because that Jammu did not produce a "Kalhana" to record its history. Of the few works on its history (already discussed) known to exist is "Raj Darshini", a history in Persian, written by Ganesh Das Wadhera. Its manuscript is in the Prince Albert Victoria Museum, London.

In fact, Dogras have rich cultural heritage, own language since ancient times. Besides, ancient shrines and old monuments scattered all over the Jammu region are evidence of the Dogra history. Dogras had their own language and script. The original script popularly known as "Ganmat" was prevalent throughout the region and, irrespective of caste or religion, all the Dogras used to correspond and maintain account books in this very script. Dogri is mentioned as one of the languages of India by the famous poet "Amir Khusro" in his "Nuh Sepehr" which shows that even before 1325 AD it was recognised as one of the languages in India.

Later, the script was modified and brought on the lines of Devnagri script and at one stage, Dogri became one of the official languages of the state the other being Persian. How Dogri is being expelled from its own home is very tragic. Dogri is very sweet language and a Dogri Song by

Mahendra Kapoor truly speaks about it in the words "Mithrhi-e-Dogren the Boli-Te Khand Mithe Log Dogre".

A popular belief says that the word Dogra or Duggar has been derived from Dvigarta- the land of hollows of lakes indicating Mansar and Surinsar lakes in Jammu region. But this theory has been dismissed for lack of historical evidence. The ancient name of the region appears to be Durgara, from which Dogra is derived through Prakrit Doggra.

Another version says that Dogri word is derived from the word Devgiri and the whole region of the Himalayas was called Devgiri in the past and the inhabitants of this place were Nagas and Pishachas who would migrate from the valley of Kashmir to outer hill slopes i.e. present Jammu, by rotation.

The nagas at a time were spread over whole Himalayan range from Nanga Prabhat in Gilgit to Burma in the east. The Nagas seem to have moved from west to Nagaland in the east. The people of whole belt from Bhaderwah to Reasi are great worshippers of Nag Devtas till date and presence of thousands of Naga shrines in the region are evidence of it.

Further the movements of "Kudd" and "Phumani" two famous dances of Jammu region have resemblance to Naga Dances. "Kudd" is a noctural dance which is performed with torch lamps. The character of dance clearly identified that this was a Naga dance in the ancient past. Thus we can conclude that Nagas were the ancient inhabitants of Devgiri (Himalayas) spread over the whole range who, with the passage of time and Aryan influence became Dogras and the meagre number of Nagas surviving the stress and strain of the history have shrunked in the number and few of them are still found in the North-Eastern region of India. The Pishachas remained behind to be called as "Adivasis".

The North-Western Himalaya Region bordering Nepal was mainly inhabited by Dogras with Nepal and Poonch as two extremes of "Pahari" dialect and Dogri as the principal dialect of all these areas. The conditions seem to have changed a lot with the passage of time and thus Devgiri must have been the source of all Pahari dialects of which Dogri alone has survived till now while others have undergone tremendous changes during the last many centuries.

The Dogra culture is disappearing fastly from urban areas but one can still see the local festivals throughout the year in different parts of the region which includes Himachal Pradesh also whereas "Kudd" dance of Bhaderwah is undoubtedly the most stylish of Dogra folk dances performed at Night the "Phumanian" is the special nauch of the lower hills of the region. The word "Phumanian" in Dogri singifies blooming or gambolling about. While performing this dance the participants open and close their fingers like blooming of flowers. It is a dance in which facial expression displaying joy and exhilleration play prominent role. It is most unfortunate that Dogras are getting away from their own culture and are ignorant about their importance and traditions.

CUSTOMS AND BELIEFS OF THE DOGRAS

Dogras from the very look have their own peculiarity. The Kandi people are generally rough and tough. Whereas the hilly people are shy and backward. All of them are simple, direct straightforward and terse in dealing but now, with the modernisation of the society and introduction of education in even far-flung areas, the Dogras are also changing themselves.

The old Dogra culture is fading with the passage of time but still we see the age old customs and beliefs in rural areas.

A turban and Churidar Pyjama is the famous Dogra

dress. The middle class people would wear a loose turban on the head. Women wear loose "Kurtas" and colourful churidar "Suthan" of Mughal style. The younger ones all wear blue trousers, which fit very close to leg below knee, from the calf to ankle while they fell in leg numberous folds. The women at home wear a long white cloths the only around their body called "Giddi" in local tradition. This is still prevalent among old ladies and in the women folk.

With the passage of time a lot of intermingling of dress have taken place and the people are shedding the traditional values and wearing pants, coats and ties with some have gone to the extent of wearing very Fancy dresses.

Dogras have a noble way of greeting. When Brahman meets a brahman, they will greet each other with "Pairipouna" while Rajputs greet each other with "Jaideva". The elders will bless the brides with "Jindi rou, Budh Suhagan ho, Satputri ho" (long live, enjoy married life till oldage and have seven sons). Khatris and Mahajans greet with "pairipouna". Brahamans are always looked with high esteem. Lower caste Hindus wishes other with Garib Nawaz Maharaj. Namaste Ji is prevalent among educated classes but it has been noticed that educated Dogras who had migrated to cities and other states are again adopting Dogra traditions happily.

Wheat, Maize and Bajra is a stapple food of Dogras. They have a typical choice of dishes. "Madra" is a fine preparation known for a long time. This is a liquid dish of dry fruits, milk and other compounds, a heavy diet in character. Preparation of Rajmash, a curd compound "auria" and Ambal are main attractions among Dogras. Sripulao and Meatpulao are two significant rice preparations. Mash Ki daal and Ambal are two common preparations during the community meals called "Dhaam". The community meals served on large leaf planks of lotus leave or made

from the leaves of "Pla", stiching together and stiched cups of leaves called "pattals" and "Doonas" respectively. Another Dogra meal is "Toda" made of Rice, Maize or Bajra and Saag (vegetable prepared specially). Sattu, made of Barely is a nice soft drink of Dogras and is really very tasty and energetic. However, younger generations are hardly aware of this preparation and some others.

The expert cooks are called "Siyans". They are neat and clean persons. They would take bath before preparing meals and wear light dresses. The dining place usually on the ground is cleaned and plastered with the cow dung and is separated by drawing a border. Such meals are served on the occasions of festivities and sometimes during "Mokshas", "Shradhas" and "Chubari" (fourth death anniversary).

The death of an old man or woman is an interesting instance to note. Such death is celebrated rather than mourned. It is attributed to the fact that the dead persons have seen all the pleasures of life and thus should leave the world happily. A happy send off with band and music is given to him/her. The relatives would join this occasion with colourful dressed and community meals would have to be served to them. Some people would receive token sums of money from the dependents as their share from the property left by the dying old man. Inspite of all this some close relatives would mourn the death with full grief and sympathy for the parting soul.

The mourning otherwise would be a horrible affair. The ladies would openly demonstrate their griefs by striking their hands in the naked breasts while standing in line. Special' Marasis (a low caste sect who would sing on festivities and attend to mournings) would lead this mourning and accentuate pathos to the scene. Economically also the death would be a costly affair like marriage especially when an old man died. Eleven days mournings

are for Brahmans, thirteen days for Rajputs, Khatris and other castes.

Dogras pay special attention to Shradhas of their ancestors. They would mourn this tenure with full seriousness. Most of the orthodox Dogras would not shave or take bath or change their clothes during these days. This practice was also followed during Tuesdays of mournings. Now the things have much changed and this custom hardly exists in young generations.

When in the year 1865, Maharani, (the Maharaja's wife) died the theory of paternal government was so extended as for the above rule to apply to all Hindu subjects barring Sikhs and Brahmans and every man of Hindus had a clean shave and tonsurated. It may be imagined that it took several months for the country (country word has been used because before independence, J&K was a separate country) to recover from the effect of the ordinance. This practice was repeated on the death of Maharaja Partap Singh in 1925. Now this practice exists only in backward and farflung areas of Jammu.

There is no doubt that Dogras once inhabited whole of the northern India from Poonch to the area bordering Nepal and their role in the history is an important chapter. Though now, only Jammu and Himachal have Dogra population but their culture, traditions, customs and beliefs are old and in some aspects are identical to that of other pahari areas once inhabited by Dogras. The sweet Dogras are known for the bravery. The rich Dogra culture has many pecularities and like other people, Dogras too have their own traditions, customs and beliefs.

The Dogra marriage is an unusual and interesting affair to witness. Prior to independence, the girls and boys were married in infancy. Generally the marriage age for girls and boys was ten to fourteen and fifteen to eighteen respectively but Maharaja Hari Singh who introduced certain

reforms in 1940, banned the marriage in infancy and fixed matrimonial age for girls at sixteen and boys eighteen years. Still in remote hilly areas the cases of early marriage are found but this customs is fading away with the spread of education.

A Dogra Royal marriage was not only a great celebration but it would last for several days. Drew Fredrick in his Jammu Kashmir Territories gives an account of a Dogra Royal marriage. He writes that in the beginning of 1871 an event occured at Jammu which from its unusualness and from its well illustrating some customs of the people and the State may find a place in this account. This was the marriage of one of the daughters of Maharaja Ranbir Singh.

Such an event was unusual because in former times it had been the practice for the Rajputs which their traditional customs in purity and allow their hands to be sullied by no labour but the work of fighting and hunting-to destroy their female children immediately after birth. The men unable to find wives among their own caste people, took them from the caste next below.

This practice of infanticide came to an end in 1846 when Maharaja Gulab Singh banned this custom. During those times marriages were celebrated for four to seven days and even more. Now, with the passage of time the system has changed and in this respect Dogras have adopted the system of other areas and the marriage celebrations and held in a single day barring few cases. Even cars have taken the place of horse riding which the bridegroom take the barat.

The Dogras were staunch believers in caste system and even a man devoid of virtues of his caste would enjoy the privilege and respect while the poor were hated and looked down upon. they were put to bonded labours and other exploitations. The Harijan and other low caste Hindus were

subjected to humiliating treatment by the caste Hindus. In 1940, Maharaja Hari Singh proclaimed untouchability a cognizable offence when even Muslims were generally taken to be untouchables by orthodox Hindus ladies.

Age old backwardness and orthodoxy had given birth to some good and bad omens and superstitions. Alturism is now where then in Jammu where the people will not even take names of certain towns and villages out of antipathy towards their inhabitants. For instance Jammu is called Warha Shahar, Samba Citen alla Shahar, Akhnoor, Darya alla Sahar, Jasrota batte alla Sahar, Dannal Kacha Pind and Jaganu Qila alla pind.

If on going out of the home they came across a cat it is taken to be a bad omen. The dog is a symbol of good omens. A crow on the roof is an indication of coming guests. Similarly Dogras still believe that a Journey, towards hills on Tuesday and Wednesdays is not free from hazards and troubles. Some people say:

Mangal Budh Jo Jaye Pehar Jitti Baji Ayae Har

(Those who travel to hills on Tuesday and Wednesdays will loose the game which otherwise they would have won).

The black magic was widely in hilly and backward areas of Jammu region and thousands of persons would be victims of with chcraft of old ladies. Infants were usually targets of black art. It was widely prevalent during the reign of Maharaja Partap Singh (1885-1925). It is said that he once called a lady who was reportedly and expert in black magic. The Maharaja directed her to give a demonstration of her art. She asked for a pumpkin and made a small hole on the surface. Later, when she applied her black magic, the pumpkin had become a hollow and the inner pulp was lying outside the premises.

The old widows were suspected indulging in black magic which was declared a cognizable offence.

Another kind of black art prevalent in hilly areas is "Jariyan". It is belied that a power of some herbs or ash of the bones of dead persons is given to the victim and the victim is gradually reduced to skeleton with the passage of time.

Jogis, Gararis and Dayalas are called to detect out the ghost who arrange chaukis by singing hymns. After detection the victim is tied in ropes and by performing certain processes the victim is cured.

However, these legacies are fastly fading with the spread of Education.

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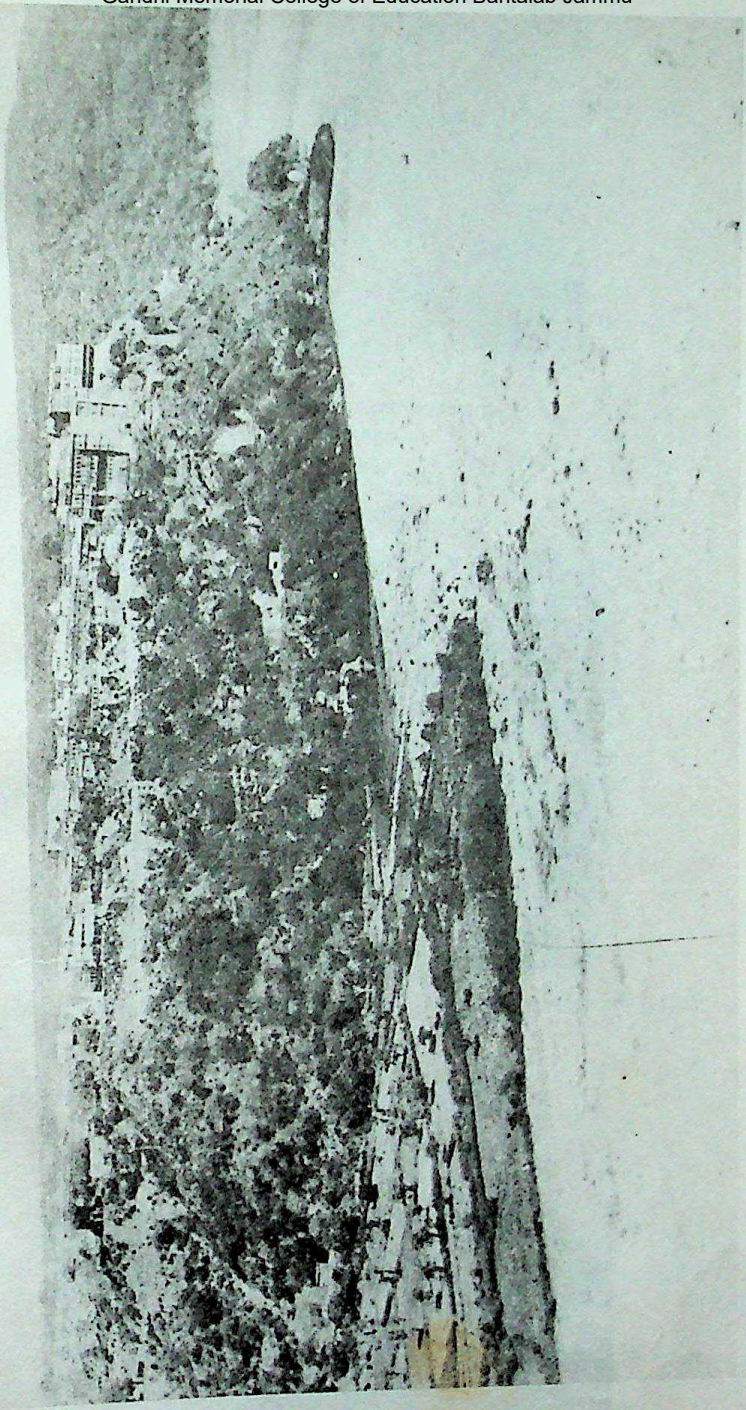
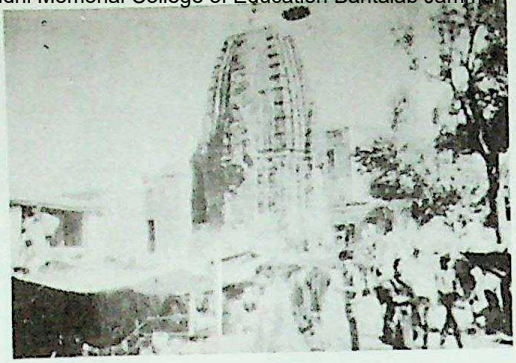
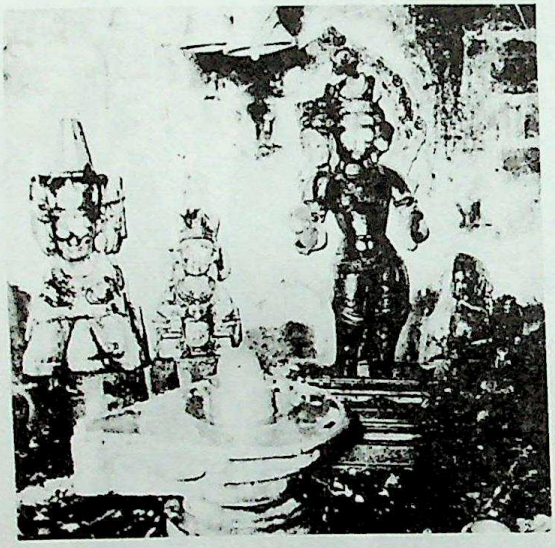


Jammu city as it looks from accross the river Tawi.
Photo By Shiv Chandeir Sharma



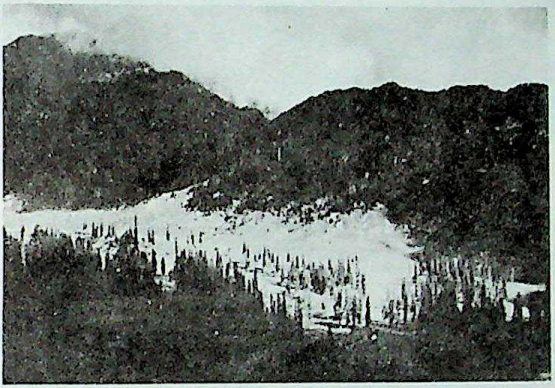
Mahabilvardshwar temple at Billawar



Exquisite scriptures in the Hari-Har Temple at Bullawar or Mahabilva Keshwara

Rock temple of Hanuman in Naj Nallah at Billawar

A view of Kaplish lake where Kailash yatra is held every year



A panoramic view on Sioz Dhar Enrouta to Kailash Yatra

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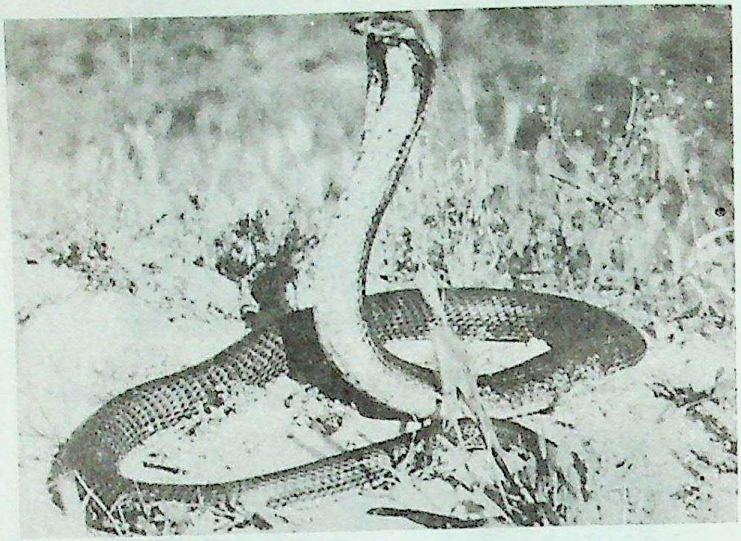
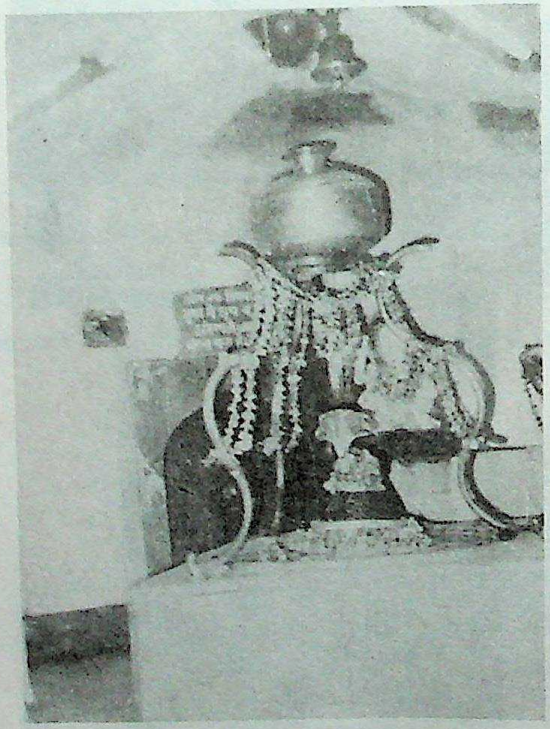
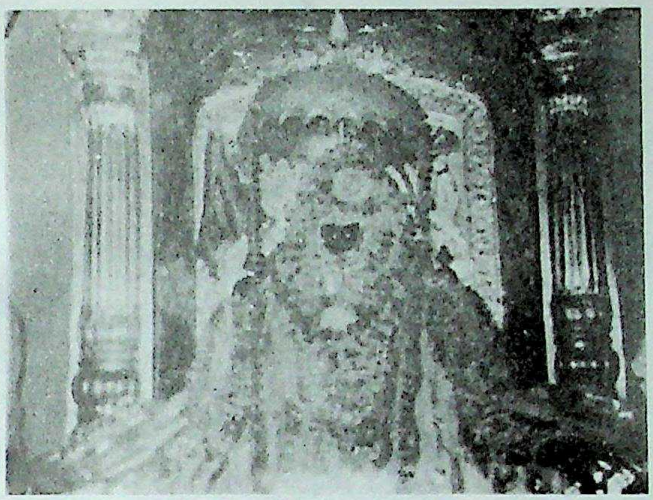
Inside the Vasurinag temple at Bhadirwah.



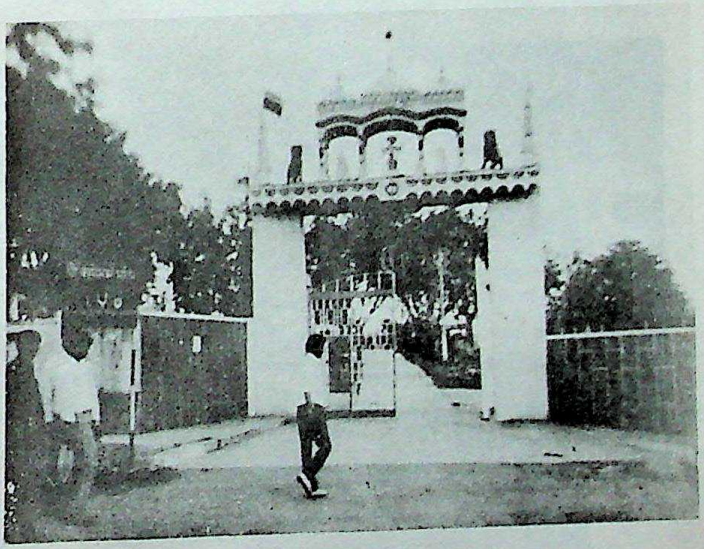
Naga



View of Shivlingam inside the Jarawani Cave

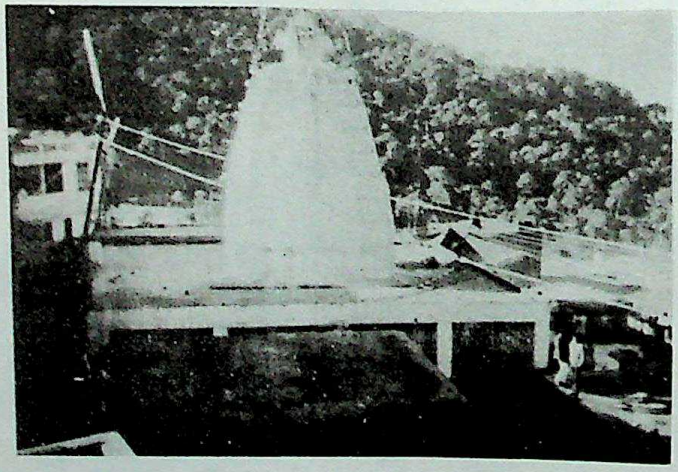


Inside the Mahamaya temple

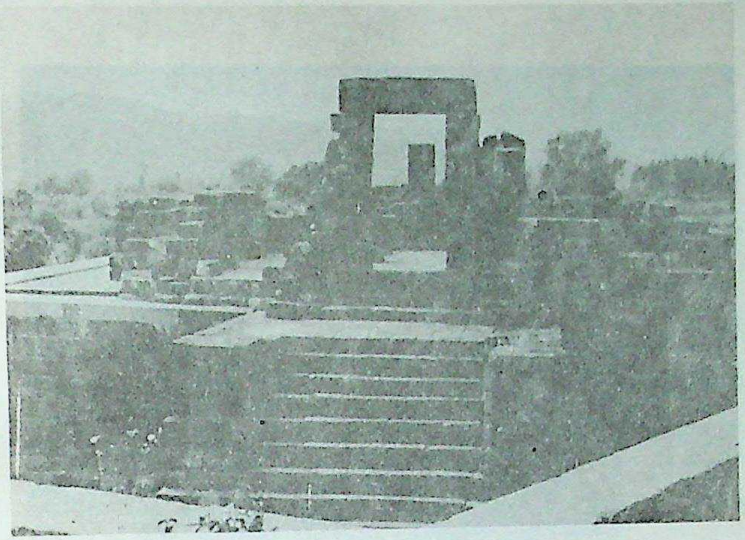


Kameshwar temple at Akhnoor

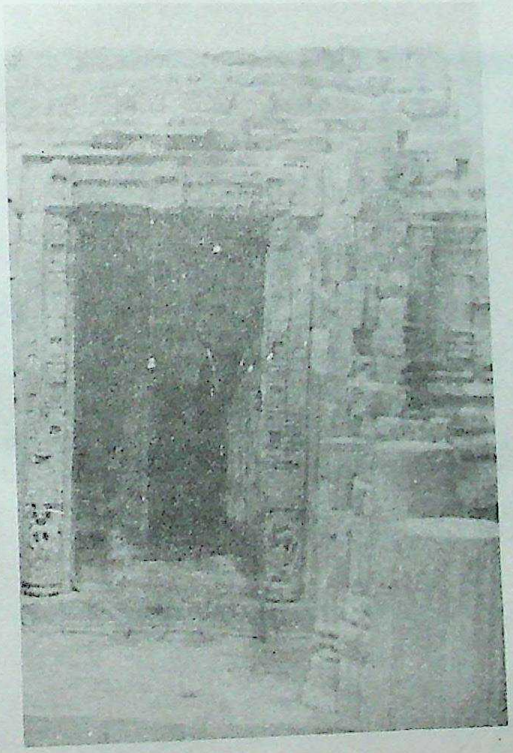
Mahakali Temple near Bhag-e-Bahu in Jammu commonly known as Bawa Wali Mata in Jammu city



A view of Sukrala temple

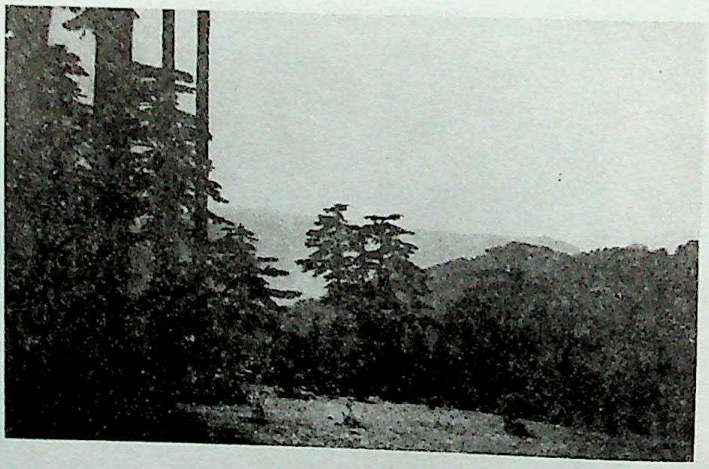


Ruins of 10th century temple of Kaladhera - I
Photo : Shiv Chander Sharma

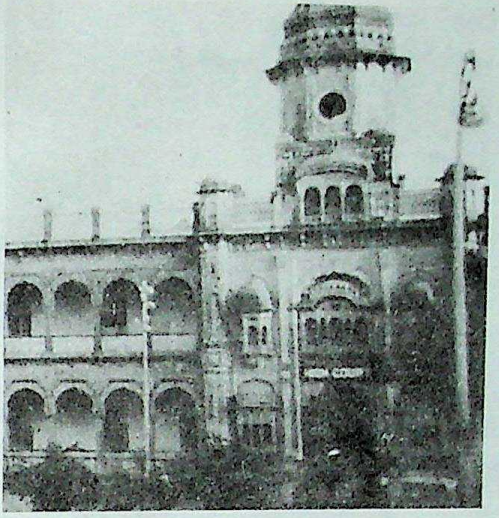


A view of Devi temple at Babor

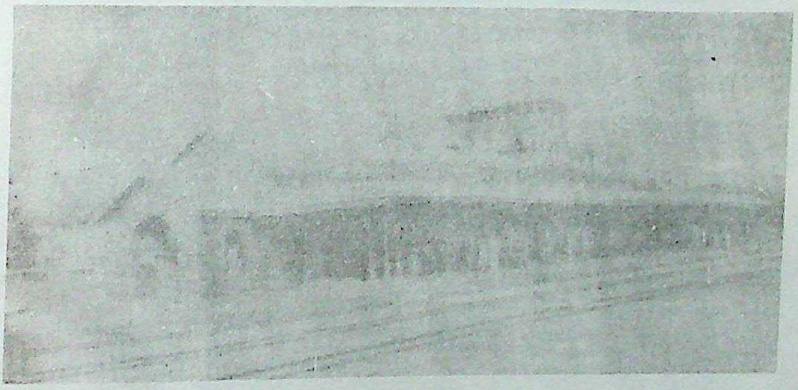
Picnic spot of Jajjar Kotty



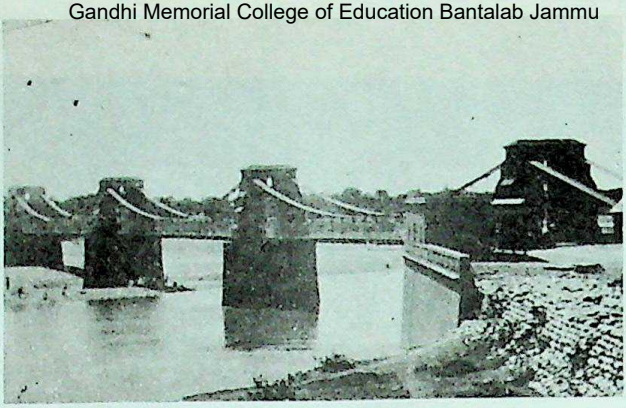
A Panoramic view of Sannasar



Part of the Mabarap Mandi Compled which served the Ministry of as FOreign Affairs.

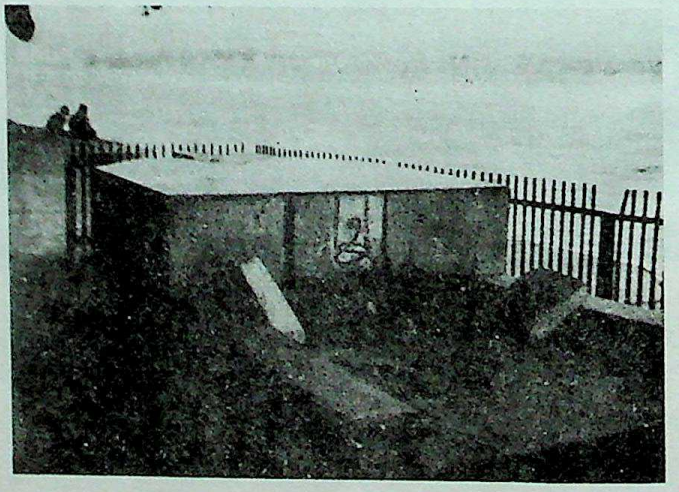


A view of Jammu Railway station prior to partition of the country.

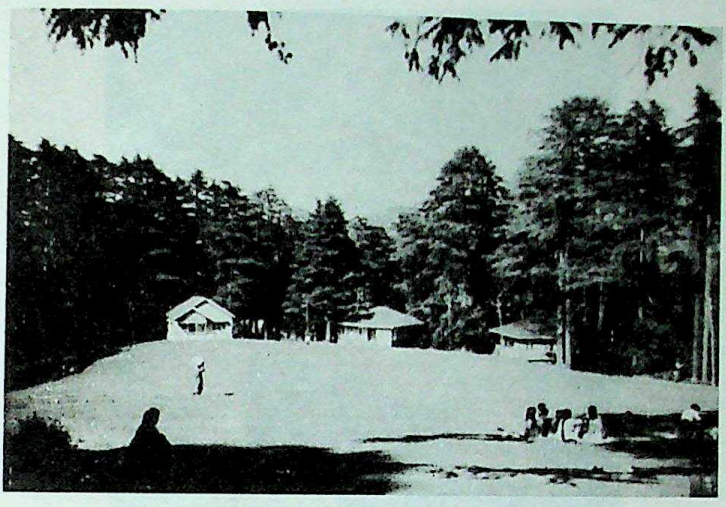


Tami bridge view of 1905

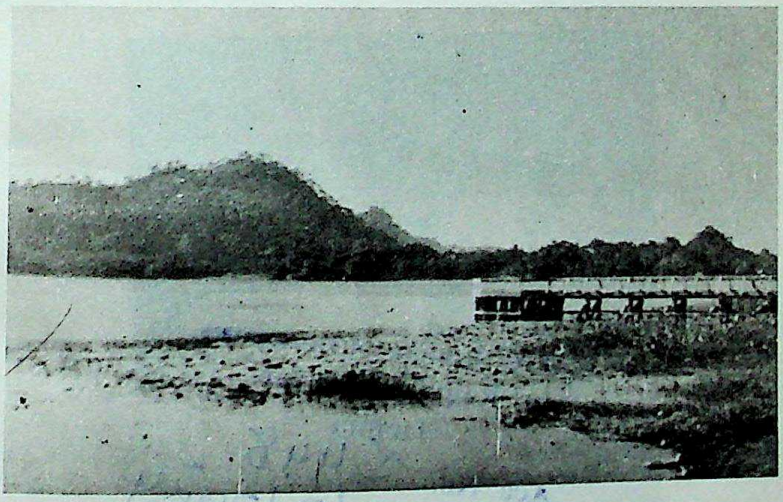
Inner view of Mubarik Mandi during the rule of Maharaja Partap Singh.



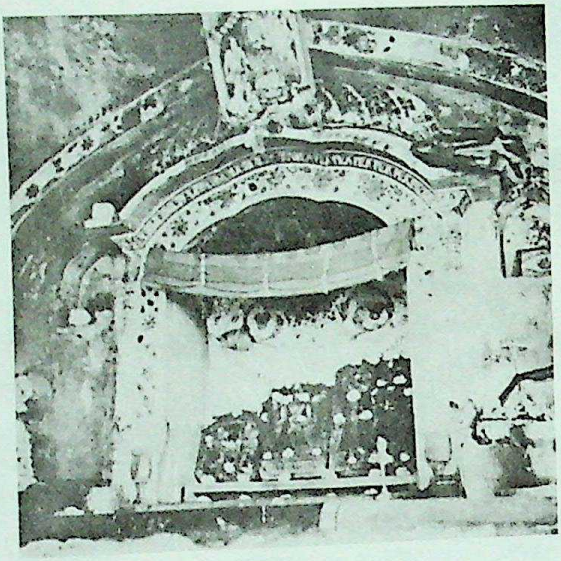
Jia Poto on the banks of river Chinab at Akhnoor Whire Maharaja Gulab Singh was enthroned by Maharaja Ranjit Singh in 1842 as Raja of Jammu Kingdom.



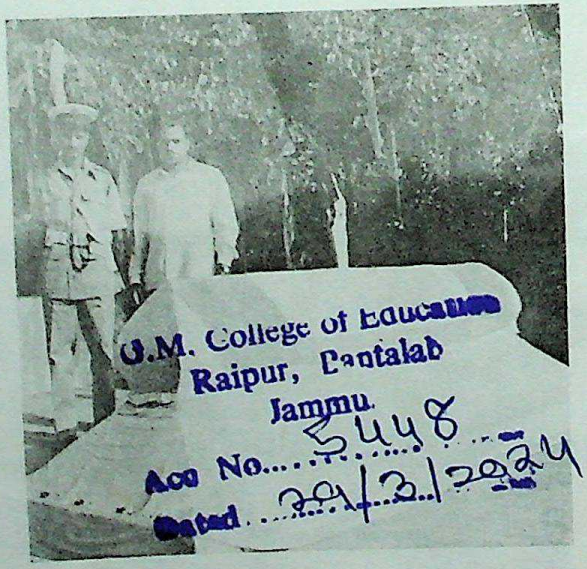
Patni Top



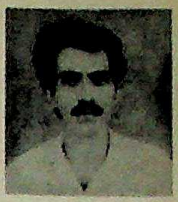
A view of Mansar Lake



A view of Shakara Sharief.



A view of Nau Gaza Pir at Gumat in Jammu city.



About Author

SHIV CHANDER SHARMA a well known writer, columnist and freelance Journalist has travelled in whole of the Jammu region in his quest to study the history, antiquity and importance of the shines of Jammu region.

Born on 8th March 1959, he began his career as a writer in the youngage of 22 years by writing articles on history, culture and shrines of Jammu in local English Papers. Later, his articles found place in almost in all the national papers and magazines both in English and Hindi. He is still engaged in writing for the national, regional and local papers/ magazines and many of his write ups have been translated in Gujrati, Kannada, Marathi, Urdu etc.

Mrs. Sharma has a keen interest in social activities and is also all India President of the Indian National Youth Organisation a social youth organisation.

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